

April 4th, 2021

Easter, b

Acts 10: 34-43; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11;

Mark 16: 1-8

As I was reading our lessons for today, I kept thinking how much the resurrection means to us. As Christians, resurrection is at the foundation of our faith. Yes, we believe in the birth of Jesus, his life among his disciples and his death on the cross. And we so importantly, believe in his resurrection, or we cannot call ourselves Christian. Jesus, whom we claim as our Savior, did not stay dead.

Today, Easter, however, does not *just* represent the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Today represents the entry of the ever presence of Jesus into our world, our life, our surroundings, our everything. And this is when I began to think, how much resurrection does mean to us in the *here and now*, and how much weight we put on that belief, to the point we have each year, today, a Sunday designated to commemorate not only his resurrection, *but his presence*.

Because of the death of Jesus on the cross, we were rescued out of our own death in sin. And because of the resurrection of Jesus, we were baptized into salvation and live now and forever, in the

resurrection of the *living* Christ. We live in Christ alive. *Because He lives*, we live in Him and He in us.

And I must admit that I cannot keep from thinking, each time I say or hear those words, “Because He lives”, I am reminded of one of the most well-known hymns, a hymn that was written and composed by Bill and Gloria Gaither, “Because He Lives”. We have sung it here many times and believe me each time we sing it, I get goose bumps.

Because of His resurrection, Jesus *lives*, and as the words of the hymn goes, “Because He Lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know *He holds the future*, and life is worth the living, just because He lives.”

One of the verses of the hymn of “Because He Lives” is particularly significant because of what was happening in Bill and Gloria Gaither’s life at the time. It was in the 1960’s and they were expecting their third child. Gloria tells the story. Bill had been very sick, --and she was expecting, --as she said, during a time, the 1960’s, when time was not as it had been. There were racial tensions, drugs were on the increase. “God is dead” was infiltrating the classrooms and educational setting, and here they were welcoming another child.

Gloria said that one evening she was sitting in her living room, truly in agony and fear, and close to even trembling, thinking of all the

things going on and happening in her world as well as the world around her and here, of all things she was bringing a newborn baby into all of this. She then says, as she was sitting there, perceptibly feeling fear, -- that “suddenly, and *quite unexpectedly,*” she was filled with a gentle, calming peace. It was, as Gloria explains it, as if her heavenly Father, like an attentive mother bending over her baby, saw his child, her, Gloria, and came to her rescue *in the very presence of Jesus*. She said that the panic gave way to calmness and an assurance, that only Jesus could impart.

Those events, as she told them, gave rise to one of the most famous Christian songs of our time, “Because He Lives”. Bill composed the music and Gloria wrote the words; she begins one of the verses specifically reflecting on that evening when, being pregnant, she had been so panicked with fear and then, had become so unexpectedly calm. “How sweet to hold a newborn baby and feel the pride and joy he gives. But *greater still --the calm assurance, that this child can face uncertain days --because He lives.*

Because of his resurrection, Jesus lives now, with us and “Because He lives, we can face tomorrow, and because He lives, all fear is gone. Because we know He holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because He lives”. Amen, Pastor Scales