

Sermon for March 23, 2008

Boscobel & Mt. Zion UMCs

Text: Mark 16:1-8 (NLT); John 14:1-14 (TEV)

Title: "Once and For All"

Introduction: Happy Resurrection Day Everybody!

What you just saw our youth and leaders act out was made possible by the reason we are here to worship today! We'll talk more about that later...

Over the past few weeks leading up to Easter we have been attempting to face the Giants in our lives. In other words, we have been looking in our Bibles for answers to the emotional roadblocks in our lives that prevent us from experiencing the life that God wants us to. God did not create us to get bogged down with all the stuff that affects us day-in and day-out. God did not intend for you and I to struggle with doubt and worry and discouragement and fear.

Jesus said that He came so that we could experience a deep joy in this life. I believe that we have Giants that stand in the way. This morning we are going to talk about the 4th greatest emotional challenge that humans have (according to one survey) in this life. I think that for many of us, this "Giant" might be a little higher on our list.

Before we talk any more about this Giant, let me ask you a question: Do you ever get irritated when someone asks you a question and then they don't listen to your answer? Or, they don't take your answer into account when they are making a decision?

Husbands, have you ever had your wife ask you a question, "Honey, should I wear the white dress or this pink one tonight?" Answer: "Oh, I think the white one looks really nice on you, dear." "Okay, well, I think I'll wear the pink one." WHY DID YOU ASK ME IF YOU WEREN'T GOING TO LISTEN!?! I think they already had their mind made up, but they were just being polite and hoping you'd feel 'involved'?!

Ever get irritated with you kids for not listening? They stand in front of you and nod and smile, but you know they are not listening. They hear you talking, but they've already decided what they are going to do so they've shut you off. (blah-blah blah-blah). You really don't want to say, "I told you so", but how many times have you said, "If you would have just listened to me, you wouldn't be in this predicament!"

Coaching is the same thing. You tell your players time after time what they need to do to be successful, but the next game ... they go back to their old habits. Like they had not had any coaching at all!

Well, guess what!?? It's Easter and here we are ready to hear the same story again. My question is, "Will we listen this time?" I wonder how many great things we've missed out on in this life simply because we were not listening.

It seems that Jesus was having a hard time getting the people around Him to listen too. We are going to read the RESURRECTION STORY out of the Book of Mark this year. Mark's version of that first Easter is much shorter than the others who wrote about Jesus' Resurrection. LISTEN Carefully:

READ MARK 16:1-8 NOW AND PRAY!

Okay, let's back up a little bit. Remember last weekend we were talking about Jesus appearing to the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem? According to the Book of John, the 11 remaining disciples locked the doors and tried to stay out of sight. Do you know why? Jesus had just died at the hands of a horrific Roman execution/crucifixion. As followers of Jesus, the disciples thought that maybe they too would be killed in a similar manner. So, what were they afraid of? DEATH.

Remember Peter telling Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane that he would never leave him, "not even if I have to die with you!" But, in reality, Peter, as Jesus predicted, swore that he did not know Jesus three times that night. Why? What was Peter afraid of? DEATH.

So, DEATH was at the top of the Disciples list of GIANTS that they had to face so that they could live this life the way God intended them to. Isn't it ironic that the very GIANT those disciples were afraid of is the GIANT that was defeated on EASTER MORNING by Jesus? If the disciples had been listening, they would have known that before it happened ... BUT, they weren't listening!

Let's go back to the women at the tomb. It doesn't seem to me that they did a very good job of listening either. Listen again to what Jesus tells them through this angel in the tomb:

The women were startled,⁶ but the angel said, "Do not be so surprised. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He isn't here! He has been raised from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body.⁷ Now go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died!"¹

Did the women listen? Not according to Mark. The angel said for them not to be surprised/alarmed/afraid, yet they were! These women ***should have been partying*** all the way back to where the disciples were. They should have been telling everyone what happened. What did they do?

*⁸The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, saying nothing to anyone because they were too frightened to talk.^{*2}*

Angel = "Don't be afraid!" Response = Fear! Angel = "Go tell the disciples!" Response = Fear! Too scared to tell anyone anything!

Talk about not listening! Remember, Jesus told the disciples many times that He would die, but the third day he would come back to life. They should have been outside that tomb at daybreak after the Sabbath with party hats and fireworks. Instead, they were holed up in a room with the doors locked! Why? Because they didn't listen!

In Mark 14:28 we hear Jesus telling the disciples that after he comes back to life He would meet them in Galilee. If they weren't at the tomb waiting to party, they should have at least been on their way to Galilee to meet Jesus where He told them to meet Him! NOPE! Instead, they were holed up in a room with the doors locked! Why? Because they didn't listen!

¹*Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 1997 (Mk 16:5). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.*

Mark 16:8

The most reliable early manuscripts conclude the Gospel of Mark at verse 8. Other manuscripts include various endings to the Gospel. Two of the more noteworthy endings are printed here.

²*Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 1997 (Mk 16:7). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.*

Wow! Those early disciples were not very good listeners were they? This morning, I wonder how good of listeners we are. I don't want to be like those early disciples ... I understand that if I want to know what's coming up down the road, I need to listen to Jesus! If WE are going to be prepared for what God has for US, WE NEED TO BE LISTENING!

Jesus teaches us all about being afraid of death in John 14. Here's how it goes...

READ JOHN 14:1-14 NOW!

I. WE CAN QUIT THINKING THAT WE ARE IN CONTROL

- A. V.1 = "Do not be worried and upset..."
 - 1. But I have to! That's who I am. What else will I do with my time?!?
 - 2. No, you don't have to. As a matter of fact, Jesus tells us not to. It's an order, not a suggestion!
- B. Jesus tells his disciples (and us) plainly: "Put your faith in God and Me (Jesus), and I've got the rest covered."
 - 1. You don't have to be concerned about what's coming next.
 - 2. You don't have to lose sleep over a situation that you don't even know is going to play out.
 - 3. You don't have to be worried or upset!
- C. Do you believe that you don't have to be worried and upset, or are your actions going to show Jesus this EASTER that YOU DON'T BELIEVE HIM?
 - 1. We have a choice.
 - 2. Jesus said, "Don't be worried and upset..."
 - 3. Are we listening?!?

II. WE WILL HAVE A PLACE TO BELONG ... FOR ETERNITY!

- A. We, as humans, all desire to BELONG. Jesus offers us that for forever!
- B. "There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you..."
- C. If you've ever been to a funeral that I have done, you may have heard me begin to describe what that room might look like.
 - 1. It's not going to be a pre-fab!
 - 2. Jesus knows what brings us the greatest joy, and will prepare our place accordingly.
 - 3. It will be personal to us ... Our Paradise as prepared by the One who knows us better than we know ourselves!
 - 4. We won't lack anything!
- D. Not only will we have a great personalized place, but we will have 'perfect' bodies to enjoy that space with. No more aches and pains and limitations and disease and aging and stuff ... no more calories! PERFECT!

- E. Okay, now we have a problem. We have this great place prepared for us in a heavenly place. The problem is that we have to go through DEATH to get there! That DEATH stuff is still at the top of our list of FEARS, right?!? Death is an unknown...

III. WE DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THE JOURNEY BY OURSELVES

- A. V.3 = "...I will come back and get you and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am."
- B. Do you all remember being a little kid? I remember going camping with my family in our little trailer. In the night, I remember waking up and having to go to the bathroom. I'd try to hold it so I didn't have to go out in the dark and up the path to the restroom ... or even out in the dark behind a tree.
1. Guess what I did? "DAD?!? Are you awake?"
 2. As long as my Dad went with me and held my hand, I had nothing to be afraid of in those woods...
- C. Jesus says about death, "Don't worry and don't be upset. I will come and hold your hand and walk you to Paradise!"
- D. When we get there ... I'm guessing that Jesus will take us around and introduce us to everyone there.

IV. WE CAN KNOW THE ONE WE WILL SPEND FOREVER WITH

- A. V.7 = "Now that you have known me," he said to them, "you will know the Father also."
1. I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but after Sarah and I had been married awhile, I realized that I was comfortable around her. She was "home" for me!
 2. We've been through some thick and thin together and I know now more than ever that I want to experience life WITH her.
- B. That's the way it was with Jesus and the Disciples. They had been through thick and thin together.
1. Jesus told them that it would be just like that in heaven for eternity.
 2. You already know who you're spending forever with!
 3. And, it seems that the Disciples enjoyed their time with Jesus, so it was something they could look forward to!
- C. It's good for us to know. The same Jesus that we know from Scripture; the same Jesus that we enter into a covenant relationship with; the same Jesus that we invite to be Lord and Savior; will be with us for the long run.
- D. "SANTA! I know him!"

V. WE CAN LIVE IT NOW!

- A. V. 12 = "...those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things..."
1. Because Jesus rose from the dead, went ahead of us to prepare us a place in heaven, sit at the right hand of His Father and sent the Spirit to fill us up, we will be able to do greater things—for God’s Kingdom—than Jesus did when he was here...
 2. WAIT! Didn’t Jesus do some pretty impressive stuff when He was here?
 3. RIGHT! ARE YOU LISTENING? We will do greater things for God’s Kingdom ... IF we believe in JESUS ... and Jesus’ RESURRECTION ... and Jesus’ WORD!
- B. And, check this out ... V. 14 = “If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it!”
1. What? Anything? Yes, but remember who Jesus is saying this to ... “...those who believe in me...”
 2. BUT, it’s not, “I wish I had a new 4x4 truck, God.”
 3. What we ask for in line with bringing glory to God will be given!
 4. So, if you feel led by God ... “God, I could really use a truck, because I could really haul food and clothing to the homeless poor if I had one of those!”

So, our eternal life can begin today! Jesus came that our Joy would be complete! We don’t have to wait ... we’d be foolish to wait. We’d be foolish to try out everything that the world has to offer like Hannah did.

Jesus already conquered the GIANT OF DEATH, so we don’t have to! All we have to do is LISTEN ... then be faithful to what Jesus is telling us.

“Believe in God and believe also in me.” There are way too many of us still fighting the GIANT of DEATH, when it’s already been defeated!

“Do not be so surprised. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He has been raised from the dead!”³

And you will be too! Happy Resurrection Day!

Let’s Pray!

³Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 1997 (Mk 16:6). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.