

Be Sanctified

Faith Resurrected: Part 7 “Be Sanctified”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – May 16, 2021

7th Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

Reflection: Psalm 1

Greeting: Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Prayer: Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we who celebrate our Lord’s resurrection, by the renewing of your Spirit, arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 1

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

(Psalm 1 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 1 and we hear of following the Lord. That other paths are available to us, but the only one that helps us is the one God sets us upon. Do you feel God is watching over you? That Christ has put you on the right path? How do you share that path with others? How should we lead others to the light? How do we share in the joy of our Risen Savior?

Prayer: O God, our Holy One, our altar, our cloud: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your temple. Accept the sacrifices we offer, and draw us into the fire of your Spirit; hear our prayers and have mercy, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 1, verses 15 through 17 and 21 through 26.

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 NRSV)*

Our next reading is from 1 John chapter 5, verses 9 through 13.

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:9-13 NRSV)*

Our last reading is from John chapter 17, verses 6 through 19.

"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:6-19 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We continue our Easter series entitled “Faith Resurrected” with our next message “Be Sanctified.” Every message in this series is going to be using a phrase from the Gospel reading for that week. Today we ask ourselves what it means to be sanctified in the truth.

One of the things that we see in our readings for today is an Acts. The Apostles are trying to fill a gap that has been left. Judas is no longer among the twelve and they feel that there should be twelve, so that the twelve can take up their share of the ministry. For them to feel complete, they need to have somebody take his place. And so, they gather someone in that has been with them since the beginning so that they have somebody that can also be a witness and that they can be complete again. In our reading from John's letter, we hear of John speaking about what the testimony of Christ is. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts, that they know what they have. And those that don't believe aren't concerned with the truth. That whoever has the Son has life, so that we may know we have eternal life in Christ. Now I turn to our gospel reading. And Jesus is very much talking about the way that he has watched over those that have been in his charge. That he has watched over his followers and that now he is committing them fully into God's care. Because shortly after this he will be betrayed, that he will be handed over to be beaten and crucified. It's not a pleasant thought. What's interesting in John's gospel account is that Jesus recognizes that his followers are no longer of the world, controlled by the world's problems because they are now fully focused on God's mission. But his followers aren't to be taken out of the world, but to go out into the world to share this message.

Here we come upon the idea that gave us the title for today's message. That we're to be sanctified in the truth, God's truth. That just as Christ was sent into the world, Christ's followers are to be sent into the world to share the truth. That we may be sanctified in truth. That Christ sanctifies himself so that we may be sanctified, that we may be blessed to carry the truth with us. Because the truth has been given to us. That we are blessed in this way. That we are blessed to know the message. Blessed to carry on to be able to go out into the world to share the message of God's love. Now what struck me is in reading these accounts, was this focus on being able to go out into the world to share this message. But that it also comes with a responsibility that's laid on us. That I think has something very important in it that we have to be able to understand. And part of that is that if we go out to share the truth of our risen Savior, the truth of eternal life, the truth of Christ's great love for us, that he would go to die on the cross. That he would rise to conquer sin and death. We have to carry with us the importance of that truth. But with it, we also have to carry with us the importance of the truth itself. Because we cannot just be honest in this one thing. That, yes, it is good, and it is necessary that we be honest in our faith. That we be honest in what we believe. That we be honest in what we know about our risen Savior and his great love. That we be honest about God's grace and God's glory.

But we also have to remember that we are still in the world, even if we are not of the world. And we have to resist the temptation to let ourselves become of the world. Now what I mean by that is that we can't fool ourselves into thinking that the only truth that matters is the truth that we know in Christ. Now, that statement might sound a little strange at first. Isn't that the ultimate truth? Isn't that the truth that everyone must know? Yes. However, if I were to stand up and tell you that Jesus Christ is my Savior and that he died so that I may have life eternal, and that two plus two equals six, you now have reason to doubt everything that I have said. If Christ allows this man to think that two plus two equals six, what value is truth in the eyes of our Lord? And therein lies our problem.

One might think that in the age of great information where information is just a click away, when we have the knowledge of the world at our fingertips, that it would be even easier than ever to share the truth. But the opposite comes into play as well. That it's even easier than ever to spread a lie. And the problem is that either we embrace truth everywhere or our account is called into question. If our account is called into question, we cannot testify to eternal life and our Savior if we cannot hold the trust of those listening. If we are to be sanctified in the truth, then the truth must be in us in all things, even when it's difficult. What this says to me is that it's not enough to simply say that we know Christ as our Savior, but we must live it. Live it in all that we are and in all that we do. Because our testimony isn't just the things that we say about Christ, our testimony is the way that we live. It does us no good to share the gospel message if our life does not reflect the gospel message. If we hold to the truth of God's word and God's will but don't live it, then the truth doesn't reside in us.

We are called to be in the world but not of the world. And to me that says that we have to be concerned with what goes on in the world, but it's not the world that dictates to us how we are to live. God is the one that gives us life and gives us truth. God is the one that guides us in leads us. It is along God's path that we must go, guided by the Holy Spirit, following what Christ taught us. And we cannot embrace dishonesty while trying to embrace Christ. For me, that means that we have to be more careful than ever about making sure that we speak the truth in all things. The temptation is everywhere. A convenient lie often makes us feel much better than uncomfortable truth. When things don't go the way we expect them to go, when we read things that don't match with how we want things to be, one way we deal with that is pretending that things aren't the way they are. We do this in all sorts of ways. It could be we believe in a rumor about our neighbor, simply because it matches what we already think about them. It could be we believe a lie shared that helps us to reconcile the way the world is. And the problem is that once we begin to accept lies instead of truth, we tarnish our witness. We saw a reflection of this in Acts when the Apostles needed to find somebody else to be able to go out and share the truth, they wanted somebody who was already walking in that path, somebody who knew the truth who would be able to testify to it, who wouldn't be questioned. That when we go out to live our lives, we have to be able to do it willing to speak the truth even when it's not what we or others want to hear.

The reason that this is so important, and the reason that I made the truth my focus for today's message is because if people see the followers of Christ embracing lies, then we make people question if Christ's love is a lie. If we are willing to be dishonest to others about anything, then the problem is that the people we are trying to reach will think that we will be dishonest about anything. We cannot follow dishonesty and Christ. One of the complaints Christ made against the religious leaders was their hypocrisy. And others will see that hypocrisy in us if we claim to speak the truth but are willing to lie so easily. So, the truth becomes ever more important in our witness and becomes ever more important in the way that we carry ourselves. That if we are to speak the truth of salvation, the truth of eternal life, we have to speak to the truth in all things. Because God is there for us. God will shelter us even when things are difficult, when people want us to share in their lie instead of share in the truth. That God will give us the strength to overcome and the strength to always be honest in all that we are so that we may be an honest witness to Christ. That we may be an honest witness of God's love. That we may be sanctified in the truth in all things.

My point today is this: know that you are sanctified in the truth. Know that Christ is with you. Know that we speak the truth so that people will know that we speak the truth of Christ when we speak it. The people will hear our witness of God's love and grace and mercy and know it to be true because they know us to be true because we have been sanctified in truth, and that we carry that spirit of truth within us to share it with the world, so that others may not be of the world but may be of God. That we are in the world to share God's message of hope. To share Christ's love. And that we do so by living a life in which we reflect the truth in all that we are and all that we do. So that when our words about our risen Savior reach the ears of those in need, that they may trust it. So that all may be sanctified in the truth and the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: We are reluctant, O Author of Love, to set aside our hurt, our anger, our disappointment. Heal us with your tender touch, that we might be cleansed of all unclean thoughts, all schemes of revenge, all hope of vindictive retribution. Open our eyes to the power of love, shown to us in the unselfish sacrifice of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Faith Resurrected

Our series is *Faith Resurrected*, and each week's title is taken from the words of Christ as we explore what it means to serve a Risen Savior.

April 11th – *Come to Believe* - Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 18th – *You are Witnesses* – Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 25th – *Listen to My Voice* – Acts 4:5-12; 1 John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18

May 2nd – *Abide in Me* – Acts 8:26-40; 1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

May 9th – *I Chose You* – Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

May 16th – *Be Sanctified* – Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

May 23rd – *He Will Guide You* – Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

Prayer List

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| Rev Charliam Renner | Bishop Frank Beard | Our Conference | Our Healthcare Workers |
| Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew | | Angie Veach | Eric Veach |
| Cathy Devall | Brock McMorris | Ed & Verna Titus | Henry Catey |
| Jake Kiser | Cindy Cisney | Nancy Hoke | Don Wells |
| Tricia Adkins | Ronnie & Elaine Carlen | Don Stewart | Michael & Makenzie Reynolds |
| Ronnie Winstead | Annie McMorris | Dwight Parsons | Trinity Powers |
| Lauren Stewart | Charlie Henderson | Rosalee Chancellor | Phyllis Gable |
| Sage Martin | Dalton McFarland | Family of Davey Yaw | Family of Wilma Clark |
| Terri Kemper | Darrell Quick | Family of Hugh Eubank | Shelley Murphy |
| Family of Doris Devall | Family of Doris Devall | Family of Macel Buss | Family of Winona Saathoff |
| Jeff Davidson | Richard Durham | Kathy Hanks | Nora Werner & Family |
| Wayne Carrell | Gary & Mary Winterrowd | Leo Smith | Bonnie Hite |
| Donna Graham | Kevin Drum | Greg Williams | Eloise Buffenmeyer |
| Martha Roberts | Charlie & Charlotte Baxter | Paul Schulte | Kim Hennes |

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