

October 13, 2013
Pentecost 21

“Remember Jesus Raised from the Dead”

2 TIMOTHY 2:8-13

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

The Apostle Paul was facing his last days of life on this earth. He is a prisoner in Rome waiting to be executed for the Christian faith. Before dying he writes to a young pastor named Timothy who was like a son to him. He encourages him to remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

Paul knew the confidence, strength and joy that Jesus’ resurrection brought to him daily. In his letter to the Philippians he said, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.” He knew Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and he wanted to know more it more fully. He wanted his young pastor friend to wake up every morning and live each moment of every day remembering Jesus raised from the dead.

Ask the people coming out of Costco, “What do you want more of in your life?” You might hear quick answers such as, “More money” or “More fun” or “More love” or “Better health.” These are all important blessings but they pale in comparison to the blessing of knowing Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. The more you know about Jesus’ resurrection, the more you want to know. You want it to form the foundation of everything you believe, every thing you do, and who you are. It should not surprise us that Paul, who is about to die for his faith, offers young Pastor Timothy the best advice anyone could ever give. “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.”

You know the risen Lord

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.” Paul had entered into a whole new world and a whole new life when the risen Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus with the words, “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me.” He was suddenly transformed into believing that Jesus Christ who had died on the cross had also risen from the dead. He came to believe the accounts of the early Apostles like Peter and John and Thomas who said they had spent time with Jesus after he rose from the dead. He came to believe that they actually saw the nail prints in his hands and the place where the spear pierced his side.

Paul and Timothy shared this belief that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. You

have a miracle sitting next to you. You are sitting next to someone who believes the things we have seen with our eyes of faith are more real than anything we see with our physical eyes. Everything we see with our eyes will someday be gone. What we see in Jesus and his resurrection will last forever. Jesus said in John 20, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Your eyes of faith have seen the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the empty tomb, the grave clothes left behind, the nail marks in Jesus' hands. These are all so real to you, more real than the problems you are facing this week. The body of the risen Lord Jesus is more real than the sin that infects your life and causes you no end of anguish and pain. It is more real than aches and pains you have in your body. It is more real than financial problems. It is more real than the worries you have for people you love. It is more real than the loneliness you feel when someone you love is no longer with you.

It is amazing that we believe as Paul did that Jesus who was raised was also descended from David. Remember the Christmas account in Luke 2. Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem for the census because they were of the house and line of David. Through Mary, Jesus was a descendant of David. He was born into this world fully human. "The Word became flesh." He was even tempted in all parts as we are yet he was without sin. The blood that came from his wounds was real human blood. The pain he experienced as he suffered for our sin was real pain.

I can still hear the lady who used to live next to the church, famous for her peacocks. I visited her in the hospital after hearing she had a very serious case of cancer. I went into her room. She said, "Hi" and smiled. The next words that came from her mouth were, "I am thinking of the blood of Jesus as he was dying on the cross and how it paid for all my sin." That was so real to her it gave the assurance of complete pardon and forgiveness.

Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Jesus is alive. He sits at the right hand of God. He still carries the nail marks in his hands and someday we will see him in heaven. Those nail prints are more real than the sin that you saw in your life this past week. We pound our chest and cry out "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Don't think for a moment that you have the resources inside of you to make yourself worthy of God's love or to make some atonement and sacrifice to earn your forgiveness. Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. That's your assurance that his full payment for your sin at the cross is genuine and real. Paul says, "This is my gospel." Join with me this morning and let's emphasize the word "My": "This is my gospel."

You know the power of his Word

This risen Lord Jesus Christ has also given his Word to us and that Word will not fail to accomplish what he desires. Paul writes to Timothy about the power of that Word. "But God's Word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

Here is Paul sitting in a prison in chains. He once tied up Christians and brought them to Jerusalem to have them put to death. Now he is ready to be put to death for the Christian faith and he is in chains. He writes at the end of this letter about the nearness

of his death, "I am ready to be poured out like drink offering, and the time has come for his departure." Even though he was in chains the Word of God was not chained. It was reaching people all over the world.

When Paul first went to Rome it seemed like his best days for bringing God's Word to people were over. The very opposite was true. The Acts of the Apostles ends with these words, "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." In his letter to the Philippians he tells us how this house arrest gave him opportunity to have people visit him in large numbers and hear the gospel. Even the Roman soldiers guarding him were being brought to faith in Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. Listen to these astounding words, "As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ." Paul was bound with chains, but the Word of God was not bound.

Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Remember what he did to guarantee that his Word would reach people throughout the world. He says in John 14:26, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." The risen Lord did not give his Word to his disciples and leave it to them to remember what he said and write it down. He gave them his Word and then sent the Holy Spirit to teach them and help them exactly what to remember.

Remember Jesus raised from the dead. Remember how powerful this Word is your life. The best moments of your life have come when you were sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him speak to you in his Word. Your loving Shepherd has taken you to mountain meadows with grasses so rich and water so pure and resting places so peaceful that it brings tears of joy to your eyes. Remember Jesus raised from the dead and then confess with Christians of every age, "The Lord is my shepherd."

The Word of God has such great power. Jesus compared it to a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large plant. In Isaiah 55 the Lord says, "My Word shall not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire." All over the world God is bringing people into his Word and bringing them to know Jesus raised from the dead. Even a sermon such as this can be accessed through a computer or smart phone from anyplace in the world. God's Word is not chained. Don't let a day go by in your life without unleashing its power in your life.

You know he is faithful

Remember Jesus raised from the dead. He will be faithful even when you find yourself struggling to be faithful. "Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." Think of some of the lowest moments in your life. Jesus was there. There is no pit so deep that Christ is not deeper. You died with Jesus. His death on the cross is allocated to you as your death for sin. You live with him. He is the Shepherd who has carried you close to his heart. His rod and staff are there for you when you walk through the dark valleys and he

will be there for you when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The more you struggle, the tighter his arms hold you. Your Shepherd is alive and you are one of his sheep. He says that nothing will pluck you from his hand.

Remember Jesus raised from the dead. Remember him in the morning, remember him in the evening and remember him in all the hours in between. Amen.