

Prayer of Adoration

Lord God, early in the morning, when the world was young, you made life in all its beauty; you gave birth to all that we know. Hallowed be your name. Early in the morning, when the world least expected it, a newborn child crying in a manger announced that you had come among us, that you were one of us. Hallowed be your name. Early in the morning, surrounded by respectable liars, religious leaders, anxious statesmen, and silent friends, you accepted the penalty for doing good, for being God: You shouldered and suffered the cross. Hallowed be your name. Early in the morning, a voice in a guarded graveyard and footsteps in the dew proved that you had risen, that you had come back to those and for those who had forgotten, denied, and executed you. Hallowed be your name. This morning, in the multicolored company of your church on earth and in heaven, we celebrate your creation, your life, your death and resurrection, your interest in us, and your redemption of all creation! Hallowed be your name, now and forever. Let all God's people say... Amen.

Reflection

From the cold hard steel of the nails, to the warmth of God's loving embrace. From the ugliness of the cross, to the beauty of God's majesty. From agony and pain, to joy and celebration. From the bitterness of the wine, to the sweet halleluiah. From mockery, to praise and honor. From a body laid to rest, to an empty tomb. From doubt, to faith. From despair, to hope. From death, to life. Brothers and sisters in Christ... Hear the good news! Christ is Risen! Once again, we come into this space and at this time and celebrate... Christ is Risen! Alleluia! Thanks be to God!

So what? What now? What do we do? What do we say? How do we respond? What is our role? Well, one thing is clear from all the gospel stories: "Go!" Are you filled with fear like some of the women and disciples? "Go!" Are you befuddled with curiosity? "Go!" Are you jazzed and excited and exploding with willingness to do whatever it takes? "Go!" "Go, Go, Go!" In the light of the resurrection, no one is called to just sit or stand and leave a single imprint in the ground. In the light of the resurrection, everyone who witnesses and knows and believes is called to blaze a trail and "Go!" Go, in the name of the God who sends. Go, in the hope and assurance of God's faithful promises. Go, in the light and love that can only come from God. Go, strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit that empowers.

To the new followers of Christ participating in the early church, the resurrection wasn't just an event; it was life. A life that could no longer be the same as it was. A life worth sharing, no matter the cost. After Jesus was raised from the dead, and the women and all the others had

witnessed the empty tomb and Jesus had appeared to them, I am sure they too asked “what now?” The answer was simple: The good news of God’s love for humanity through Jesus’ ultimate sacrificial love had to be shared with everyone. With the good news of Christ’s resurrection, no one should ever zip it or put a lid on it- it was too good to be bound or placed in a box saved for later.

In Acts 4, it says, “The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” Further on in the same chapter, it says, “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.” And in Acts 17, we read that, “Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.”

It wasn’t just that they were preaching and proclaiming. It was what they were preaching and proclaiming that mattered. People in the early church needed to hear the resurrection message of hope, and so the disciples went and proclaimed.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.” 1 Corinthians 6:14

And Peter wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1:3,4

The proclamation of the resurrection began with Jesus even before he died. He told the disciples in John, “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:40

Paul wrote to the Romans: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” Romans 8:11

Again, Paul writes: “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” Romans 8:34

And Isaiah prophesied of the good news: “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” Isaiah 25:8

The resurrection of the Lord is good news that must be shared. Not just then with the early church, but today. That is why authors and scribes took time to write all the stories of the

bible down. So that you and I could benefit from the good news- not just as recipients, but as conduits and instruments of that good news. We too, are commanded to "Go!"

For believers like you and me, the resurrection of the Lord is more than a cross (the cross couldn't defeat him or hold God back); the resurrection of the Lord is more than an empty tomb (a stone boulder rolled in front of an opening and sealed for good measure couldn't keep him locked in or restrict God from revelation and glory). For believers like you and me, the good news of the resurrection of the Lord means hope, power and life everlasting. That message is too good for us to keep bottled up inside. All of God's children are worthy of hearing that good news and we are just the ones who can help make that happen.

One Friday night, some grandparents had their grandchildren for a sleep over. Following a movie, before they went to bed, the older one, who is 11, prayed that everyone on earth would come to know Jesus, because he recognized the hope that comes with faith in Christ. So I asked him, "Do you know God's plan for getting everyone to know about Jesus?" He thought for a bit, but then said he didn't know. I told him, "God's plan is for us to help tell others."

In the scriptures, Jesus identifies Himself as the resurrection. Just as He describes Himself as the light of the world, bread of life and the living water, He declares Himself as the resurrection, when he tells Martha after her brother Lazarus has died, "I am the resurrection and the life". He not only meets our deepest spiritual needs by being the light amidst the darkness, and satisfies our hunger and quenches our thirst, but He declares Himself as the one who will fulfill the promise of victory over death. And what greater reason for hope is there for us, that we, through Jesus' sacrificial love, will have eternal life with Christ? It is in this hope, that we must "Go!"

The world is full of people who need hope. The message of Easter, the resurrection of the Lord, is a message of hope, power, and life. Let's take that message of Easter and share it.