

February 5 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with parishioner memorial gifts of 15 beautiful stained-glass windows over the years, as summarized in the wonderful guide put together by Virginia Wiley in 1990, as part of the 175 year anniversary celebration of the church. The window of focus is the resurrection of Jesus, located in the second window on the right side from front facing the Chancel and framed in the upper medallion.

The framing of the window of the resurrection of Jesus is the same as with the other stain-glass windows. The border of green laurel leaves symbolizes the triumph of eternal life and the leaves of golden oak signify God's glory and strength. The upper medallion is framed in an ornate gold mandala, representing the everlasting life that God has given us in Christ Jesus through His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. On top of the mandala rests an angel, robed in red on a half shell, who is God's messenger of the Good News of His sacrificial suffering and love, saving grace, and everlasting hope sent from heaven that is present throughout our life's faith journey.

We see Jesus crowned with a Holy nimbus and robed in the white of His sinless nature and the gold of His glory, being raised out of the tomb shrouded in the glory of His resurrection. We see the wounds of His crucifixion, *knowing that He was pierced through for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5)*. Christ is carrying a banner of the cross on a cross-shaped staff. The banner background, is white, representing peace, purity, and innocence. The red cross represents the victory won in the death and resurrection of our Lord as exclaimed in *1 Corinthians 15:54,57: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. ... Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* In the background, we see the bedrock of the tomb that was provided by Joseph of Arimathea, even after His disciples had fled in fear and despair. Also pictured is a small number of palm leaves above the tomb, possibly a reminder of Jesus' triumphal arrival to Jerusalem that is now made eternally complete in His resurrection: *They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" (John 12:13)* We also see In the backdrop, the bench on which His body rested. The bench appears ornate, which is possibly symbolic of God's Mercy Seat and the perfect atonement that is now made in and through the sacrifice of His Son for the world. *He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2)*. Pictured in the foreground are the Roman guards at the tomb, *who were so shaken in fear upon seeing the angel of the Lord, who rolled away the stone, that they became as dead men.*

Matthew tells the story surrounding Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 27:57-66, 28:1-20), including the burial of Jesus, the guards at the tomb, Jesus' resurrection, the guard's report to the high priests and the Great Commission. Herein follows some perspectives of Matthew Henry's commentary on the Apostle Matthew's account. Matthew's story portrays the kindness and good will of Jesus friends that laid Him in the grave in contrast to the malice and ill will of His enemies that were very anxious to keep Him there.

Jesus was buried on the same *evening* that he died before sunset, which was not deferred to the next day because it was *the Jewish sabbath*. The person that took care of the funeral was Joseph of Arimathea. The apostles had all fled, but Joseph, a rich man and silent disciple of Jesus, *went to Pilate*

for Jesus' body. Possibly out of guilt in condemning an innocent man, Pilate was willing to give the body to Joseph who would inter it decently. Jesus's body was wrapped in a clean linen cloth and laid in the borrowed tomb, fulfilling Isaiah 53:9: *His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence; nor was there any deceit in His mouth.* The tomb was hewn out of solid rock such that his disciples had no access by some underground passage, or could not break through the back wall to steal the body contrary to the high priests' subsequent bribery of deceptions. *A great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulcher with the channel for the stone sloped so it was easy to close but hard to open.*

On the Jewish sabbath that followed, the chief priests and Pharisees were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulcher, when they should have been at their devotions, seeking pardon for the sins of the past week. They had often quarreled with Christ for His works of great mercy on that day. However, they were working the greatest malice and rebellion against God, even referring to Jesus as *that deceiver*. They were so afraid of His resurrection, they moved to have a guard set upon the sepulcher till the third day. Pilate, as if ashamed to be part of such a thing, left them to manage their inept plan. By this time Pilate likely had conversed with his centurion, who shared his personal account of Jesus' crucifixion that made him conclude that *truly He was the Son of God*

We do not know the total number of Roman soldiers guarding the tomb. *However, they would die if their prisoner escaped.* The temple guard had sealed the stone, probably with the great seal of their Sanhedrim, which could not be broken without penalty. On the Lord's Day, there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. It was the signal of Christ's victory; when *the heavens rejoiced, the earth also might be glad (Psalm 96:11).* Going to the tomb the angel, broke the seal and rolled back the stone and sat on it. *His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.* Upon the appearance of the angel of the Lord, the guards were so afraid of him that *they shook and became like dead men.*

In Christ's resurrection, the prediction of *Hosea 6:2* was fulfilled: *The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.* Christ on the sixth day finished his work; He said, *It is finished.* On the seventh day He rested, and then on the first day of the next week, Christ began "a new creation", entering upon a new work as in *Isaiah 43:18-19: Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who attended at the cross and at the closing of the tomb, continued to express their love to Christ and came to anoint the body. The angel assured them saying, "Do not be afraid...He is not here, He has risen." They are instructed to go tell the disciples that Jesus has risen and is going ahead to Galilee, honoring them as the apostles of the apostles in their constant devotion to Jesus. *They departed with fear and great joy.* On their way, Jesus met and greeted them. They threw themselves at his feet, *worshipping him* with great humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, now exalted. Jesus repeats their message; *"Go, tell my brethren, that they must prepare for a journey into Galilee, and there they shall see me." Being the First-begotten from the dead, he is become the First-born among many brethren, (Romans 8:29)*

While the women were joyfully going to bring that news to the disciples, the soldiers went to bring the same news to the chief priests, which would further harden their hearts. They shared to the chief priests all the things that had transpired. Obstinate in their infidelity, the priests and elders bribed the soldiers to lie: *“You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.”* They promised to interpose with the governor; *“We will persuade him, and secure you.* Their sin was in effect blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Gathering at the mountain, Christ commissioned the apostles and His ministers to go forth among all nations and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Triune God, and teach them to obey all of His commandments, assuring them of His everlasting presence.

The reference passage given for the sanctuary window of Christ’s resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15:20-23: *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ the firstfruits; then when He comes, those who belong to Him.* Firstfruits was a Jewish feast held in the early spring at the beginning of the grain harvest. It was observed on the third day after Passover (Christian Easter). Firstfruits offering was a time of thanksgiving for God’s provision given in Leviticus 23:9-14. No grain was to be harvested at all until the firstfruits offering was brought to the Lord. Paul shares that while death came through a man, which was the penalty of Adam’s sin, resurrection of the dead comes also through a man, Christ Jesus, the Firstfruits offering, Perfect and Holy. Firstfruits symbolizes God’s harvest of those who belong to Him in new life. If we are supposed to offer first fruits to the Lord, then this means **we are called to offer ourselves**. Romans 12:1 speaks of offering ourselves as living sacrifices unto the Lord. From scriptural commentary, “we have the opportunity to give our Creator the beautiful gift of hearts. Christ gave Himself for us, and we are to respond by giving ourselves to Him. A living sacrifice means believing who God says we are and what He has promised for us. This is where our confidence comes from, and our lives will radiate God’s presence and mercy when we embrace our confidence in Him. Every day is purposed to bring glory to God. No improvement can be made upon the will of God. When we understand what it means to worship God as living sacrifices, we get to embrace the fullness of His will for our lives.”

A song to reflect and pray on:

[\(31\) Matt Maher - Because He Lives \(Amen\) \(\[Official Lyric Video\]\) - YouTube](#)

Looking ahead – Sunday February 12

Second window from altar on right side (Lower Medallion) – Francis Makemie
– The First Presbytery-