

## ***“Living from Victory” - Easter Message***

Rev. Scott McGinnis - First Presb. Church of Newton, KS - April 12, 2020

Happy Easter! Thank everyone for watching and reading our Easter liturgy online. I hope this helps you worship Jesus and experience some of the joy of Easter. Christ Has Risen!

Would you pray with me?

*Almighty God,*

*You have set before us the Way of Jesus, but we often try to find our own path. We ask for Your help to repent when we go astray and turn back from our sin to Your Way.*

*Come Holy Spirit to guide us in Your wisdom and be our companion on this journey of faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is our Savior. Amen.*

Let me begin with a few thank you's before I start my message. Thank you to our medical workers and grocery workers in our community. You are helping all of us by your work and your care. Thank you for your community service. I have my grocery mask and hope you're encouraged when you see us wearing these. We care about you.

Thank you also to all who helped these past weeks as we've learned new ways of connecting, strengthening, and encouraging each other. Your creativity and effort have brought us so much joy. And somehow a simple phone

seems to still be the best way to show we care, so thank you to all who are calling our church family, your family, and neighbors. A friendly “How are you doing?” is a needed thing right now. Thank you.

I’m thankful for our church staff and leadership as we dream of the future. We’ve thought of gathering together again when we can with a big potluck at our church. We’ve dreamed of holding our Easter egg hunt in July, though we’ll have to wait and see when it can be. I look forward to the CASA benefit concert at our church scheduled for July 18th.

I’m thankful for you our church family and the many ways we’re staying connected and encouraging each other. Thank you to those who are sewing masks for medical workers and those donating toys and games for the kids at Ember Hope.

Looking ahead next week to my preaching, I’ll finish our Practical Grace series with a sermon on Befriending Grace based on the writing of Rev. Tim Keller. Then, the following week I’ll begin a series on the Beatitudes drawing from the writing of Rev. Darrell Johnson, one of my seminary professors. If you want to read ahead, I recommend his book *Beatitudes: Living In Sync with the Reign of God*. I hope you can join us for those videos. Our church will stay online and in the community until May 1st as a precaution. After that we wait patiently, but hope to be back at church for worship. Stay tuned.

Finally, I'm thankful for the Cross. After Jesus rose from the grave, the whole city of Jerusalem knew about it and eventually the whole Roman Empire and then the world. Jesus' resurrection made people look back to the Cross to consider what Jesus had said and what it meant.

I want to start to look at the Cross where the resurrection story begins. Matthew 28:5, an angel said to Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother Mary, **"Do not be afraid..."** Such an interesting place to begin. It has none of the excitement or trumpets or pastel colors or celebrations we usually think of and enjoy at Easter. **"Do not be afraid..."** Why so somber? Why that message?

Well, considering the angel was speaking to humans, it does seem rather fitting. These two women and all of Jesus' disciples had been through a lot. I can see that they might be afraid. Yes, especially if they were greeted by a large angel, that might come as a quite a surprise and give them a fright. But then, consider why they might be afraid.

Jesus had just defeated life's #1 enemy, Satan, and fear is quite often the enemy's go to method to stop us in our tracts and more, to stop us from knowing God. In this way it makes sense that **"Do not be afraid"** was the first message after the Resurrection. For there is much we can be afraid of in our world.

Yet, **“Do not be afraid”** was precisely the right message, because Jesus had just defeated the powers of this world, powers that seek to divide people and destroy life. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church soon after the resurrection, when they were still trying to make sense of its full meaning for them. Ephesians 6:12 says, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”**

At the Cross God in Jesus did battle with Satan and the powers of this world that seek to destroy life. Hebrews 2:14 says, **“He became like us, so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death.”** So much more was going on at the Cross than anyone could have imagined! Colossians 2:15 says, **“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, God made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”**

The moment that Jesus died the powers were defeated and the powers KNEW they were defeated. Is that not the point Matthew makes in Matthew 27:50-52?

**And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His spirit. And behold! And look! The veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs were opened and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.**

Because of Jesus' resurrection, by faith in Him, we do not need to be afraid. Sin has been defeated. We do not need to fear the enemy's taunts that we are still sinners, not good enough, not worthy enough for God's love. We were sinful by nature, but now we're washed clean by Jesus. It's just as if we never sinned. **Thank You Jesus!**

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can resist evil and go the Way of Jesus without fear. The Cross is the dethronement of the wicked, evil powers and the enthronement of Jesus Christ with His mercy, grace and love. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:8, **"None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."**

They did not know the wisdom of God: that by crucifying Jesus, they would be defeated. We do not need to fear evil, we can resist it through the power of the Holy Spirit, and go the way of Jesus.

Finally, because of Jesus' resurrection, in the words of Amy Carmichael, *"We live from victory, not toward victory."* In the Cross of Christ, God won the victory over all the powers which threaten to undo us. On the Cross, the "foolishness" of God accomplished what the wisdom of humanity never could; on the cross the "weakness" of God accomplished what the power of humanity never could do.

At the Cross the powers have been defeated, they have lost their grip, we live from victory, not towards it. We do

not need to be afraid. We have God's love, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and Jesus' authority. There's not better news on Easter and everyday.

Would you pray with me?

*Oh, Father God!*

*We have been down paths that we thought were dead ends, yet You, Oh Lord, rescue us.*

*We have experienced things that we thought would never heal, yet You, Lord, heal us.*

*We have been scared, afraid and paralyzed by evil, and yet You, Oh Lord, protect us.*

*Thank you that we know now, "The Lord lives!"*

*Blessed be My Rock, My Redeemer, My Comforter and My Friend!*

*Blessed be the God of My Salvation whose Spirit lives within me! Thank You Jesus! Amen.*