

2014\_11\_23 Christ the King  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

**Our Banners Tell the End of the Story: "VIVIT!" (He Lives!)**

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

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Grace and peace to you from Him who lives, who was dead, and who is alive forever more. Amen.

**1 Corinthians 15:20–28**

*<sup>20</sup> But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. <sup>28</sup> Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

We pray, Dear heavenly Father, send us your Spirit that we would conquer all enemies by faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

A king should be recognizable. If the Queen of England was coming to Batavia, you would expect to know about it. News papers, news stations, web media, chatter about town, having a king or queen come to visit your home town would be a big deal. And when he arrives, you surely would know it. He comes in with a grand procession; traffic is halted; security is on high alert; police are on patrol; the streets are lined with people holding up signs, crowds of people just waiting to catch a glimpse of the king. And over the street hangs a banner: a great and grand and glorious banner – Welcome to Batavia!

But the people don't get what they expect. Rather they get nothing more than a poor pauper. In Mark Twain's tale, the Prince and the Pauper, the people get something unexpected. A prince dressed as a pauper. The royal son, Prince Edward, trades places

with the lowly peasant, Tom Canty and finds out what life is like in one of London's poorest neighborhoods. Dressed as a poor pauper, the prince is unrecognizable. When he tries to claim his royal rights, he is mocked, beaten, and eventually ends up in one of England's filthy prisons. He is nothing more than a poor pauper to the people.

And how far fetched is it? For our king has come in rags; mocked, beaten, imprisoned. He comes with no grand procession or crowds to greet him. Where is the great and grand and glorious banner?

It is hanging on our walls. On either side of you hang four banners. And on the top of each banner is the Latin phrase: *VIVIT!* In those words we recognize our king. In those banners we welcome our king. In these church walls we form a grand procession. *VIVIT!* He Lives! And in this phrase we acknowledge what cannot be seen and what the crowds do not recognize, that His kingdom is not of this world. It is the phrase that adorns the banners of our church and of our lives: *VIVIT!* He Lives!

Today we will stand in that grand procession, looking ahead to the end of the story.

But this prince appears to be nothing more than pauper. It leaves you looking around and wondering who will take charge. We want to know how this story will end. For all we can tell, death is in charge; for all we can tell, death will win out. Who's in charge?

- Still people go hungry.
- Still villages lack access to clean water.
- Still refugees look for a place where they are welcome.
- Still families struggle to make ends meet and people go homeless.
- Still we contract diseases and suffer mental and emotional pain.
- Still we are persecuted for doing or saying or believing what is right.
- Still we die.

And suddenly, our prince appears to be nothing more than pauper. We look for a King to take charge. We look for things to change. We look for a place in this world to raise that banner and welcome our King. And when we can't find Him in the places we want Him, we become unsatisfied.

- We look for our King in earthly things and find ourselves never satisfied.
- We aren't even truly hungry, but we want more to eat.
- We don't just want clean water, we want it filtered, purified, bottled water.
- We find a Iranian family, fleeing their homeland in search of a place to live, but we argue and dig our heels in over issues like immigration reform.

- We complain over the unstable economy even as we sit down in our leather chair and turn on our 48 in. flat screen, digital cable TV.
- We feel the need to let the world know about our stress and emotional pain, while people in third world countries are dying from Ebola and other diseases.
- We don't speak up about the issues like abortion or divorce or homosexuality or salvation, because we are afraid someone might not agree and it would make us feel uncomfortable.
- We do what ever we can to keep our bodies looking young, afraid of what it will mean to get old and what it will be like to die.

So we take down our banners, and leave with heads hung low – looking around and wondering who will take charge? How will this story will end? Will death win out?

- The kingdom of Christ would not be recognized by the crowds. They look for a King who looks and acts like the kings they are used to; not a peasant.
- They look for a king who comes to irradiate hunger, but they find him wandering in the wilderness refusing to accept even a morsel of bread from the devil.
- They look for a king who comes to bring access to clean drinking water for all nations, but they find him found hanging from a cross, nearly dead, groaning, "I thirst."
- They look for a king who is honored and loved by all; but they find a king who is a stranger, unwelcome by the very people who call him king.
- They look for a king who will set up his own great city with a grand palace with great armies; but they find a king who has no where to lay His head, who wanders about the countryside – no job, no money, no possessions.
- They look for a king who is important, with servants to wait on his every need day and night; but they find him alone, weak, suffering, crowned with thorns, carrying the death of the cross on his shoulders.
- They look for a king who holds the popular opinion, whose reforms are championed by the world; but they find him taken captive in the dark of night, and no one stand up for him.
- They look for a king who lives and reigns, but they find a king who is defeated and dies.

The problem is, they look in all the wrong places. For hidden in that pauper is a prince, a King and our banners tell the end of the story: *VIVIT!* HE LIVES!

They don't see the end of the story. But we do. From rags to riches. From pauper to prince. Jesus is crowned Lord of all. *20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man*

*also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

The word reveals Jesus for who He truly is – a Prince hidden in a pauper. The word reveals the end of the story. And the angel says: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” We were looking in all the wrong places. We were trusting in our intellect, our reason, our perceptions, our selfish need to be satisfied – And there we will find only death reigning. And there in the world, in our reason, in our flesh, death reigns. Death is in charge.

So we raise the banners: VIVIT! We see the end of the story. He has risen! He came as a pauper that He might become our King. So our King is hungry, thirsty, outcast, homeless, cursed, captive, and crucified – for us. This is how His kingdom comes. In the promise of God. The Father sent His own Son to be the second Adam. To be made crooked that He might make straight. To do what was undone and undo what we have done. To be humbled that He might taste death for everyone. He is the son of Adam Adam who lives. And we now as sons of Adam live only in Him. He lives, He lives who once was dead! We raise the banners that tell the end of the story: VIVIT! He lives!

Luther expresses this in his explanation to the 2nd article:

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

He did this that I should be His very own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and joy; just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns in eternity.

The real enemies are earthly at all. The real enemies are not economical or political or social. The real enemies are sin, death, and the power of the devil. The real enemy is that attitude of pride and selfishness that looks only to be satisfied in the short run. But our King reigns, and in the long run He will win out. The real victory is that God redeems us and makes us His own to live under Him in His kingdom and will raise us up in the last day. So we are made a part of His kingdom, His reign, where we have victory because we believe the end of the story.

*25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.*

His victory is not yet complete in an outward visible way; rather, it continues to become known, growing closer and closer to its completion. And we experience it. Not in the things of this world. But in the things of God brought to us in His word and sacrament. There He reigns. He stomps on the devil and strengthens you to face his temptations. He stomps on sin and declares you forgiven. He stomps on the power of death and even though death is not yet destroyed, the power of death is. By faith, his victory becomes yours. For you know the end of the story.

And suddenly, our pauper becomes a King. He takes charge of our lives and hearts. He changes things dramatically. And we find a place to raise our banners and welcome our King. We just have to know where to look.

- We coordinate a joint synod effort to send food and supplies to our brethren who are suffering from a 3 year draught and our banners say: "VIVIT!"
- We contribute to the Mission Development Fund to help fund a plumbing system that will bring clean water to a village in Africa and our banners say: "VIVIT!"
- We meet an undocumented immigrant, someone with a broken past, who knows nothing of Christ, and we invite them to church and our banners say: "VIVIT!"
- Our church creates a helping hands fund designed to help our members in financial need in a budget which is already strained and our banners say: "VIVIT!"
- We visit someone who is in the hospital and comfort them with the promises of God and our banners say: "VIVIT!"
- We visit and share the word with a fellow Christian who has made some sinful choices and is now in prison, and our banners say: "VIVIT!"
- We visit a Christian who is on his death bed and we raise our banners high, saying: "VIVIT!" He is risen! And His kingdom comes.

This is the end of the story, even as we tell it today. It is the realization of our pauper King coming to us. It is the evidence of our faith and the fruits of our salvation. By our lives we truly say: Christ is triumphed! Christ is living! In this He places His enemies into submission. And on the last day, He will raise up this banner for all to see:

*Matthew 25:34–40 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You ... And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

We know the end of the story. The pauper has been crowned prince. He will complete His work. He will destroy death itself and raise up our bodies to everlasting life. Then He will hand over His work to the Father, delivering you to the Father and delivering the Father's kingdom to you. Then He will raise the banner to show to those who do not believe, the evidence that these have believed in Him.

*25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

In the end, God will be all in all. Once His work is complete, Christ will deliver all that belongs to Him into the hand of His Father. Salvation will be complete and Christ will come into His kingdom of glory for all to see. All enemies under foot. No more hunger. No more thirst. No more strangers. No more nakedness or need. No more sickness or suffering. No more persecution or imprisonment. No more death. And we will lift our banners high, singing to God: "VIVIT!" He Lives!

And the Triune God will be revealed as One. The Son will hand the scepter to the Father and God will be revealed as the Supreme, United King of all. We can say little more. But what more needs to be said. In the end, all things will be under Him. All enemies will be made His footstool. And we will rise to eternal glory and reign together with Him forever and ever.

It is hanging on our walls. In these church walls we form a grand procession. In this phrase we tell the end of the story, we speak it, we sing it, we shout it, we live it: *VIVIT!* He Lives! Amen.