

2015\_04\_05 Resurrection  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

**And I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead  
and the Life of the World to Come.**

**Amen.**

1. A look of confidence when we are afraid
2. A look of hope when we suffer
3. A look of life when we face death

Psalm 16:8-11

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As our risen Lord greeted his disciples on that first day of the week, so I bring those same greetings in His name: "Peace to you." Amen.

In the name of Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, whose accepted sacrifice on the cross gave rise to new life for Him and for us who believe, dear fellow children of God,

The cereal bowls are set out on the table and as mom and dad sit down to eat their Cheerios, their 6 year old tells them about a dream he had last night: "I had a dream that I went back in time and saw Jesus on the cross. Everyone was sad, but I was happy because I knew what happened next!"

In a sense this dream is about a confession of our faith. A last and final expectation of what will come next. It is a prayer – a prayer which finds its source in the last and final prayer of Jesus. An expectation for him of what would come next. And so in his last breaths from the cross he prays, "Father, into Your hands I entrust my spirit." Jesus gives Himself into the hands of God in a last and final prayer, because He knew what would happen next. Because he died looking for the resurrection of the dead and life of the world to come.

The text we consider this resurrection morning is a portion of a prayer. Our text expresses the thoughts of the psalmist David; but they are not merely the thoughts of David. So Peter quotes this psalm on Pentecost by saying that this does not refer to David who is dead and buried, "foreseeing this, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption."

So the psalm we consider this morning is not to be constrained to the thoughts of David 3000 years ago. Rather, here in Psalm 16, we find the eternal Son of God entering into a prayer of promise. A prayer from the 11th century B.C. A prayer which 1000 years later is heard rising from the grave. A prayer which 3000 years later is heard rising in our hearts this morning. And so this prayer becomes our prayer – the last and final statement of your faith as we confessed just moments ago in the Nicene Creed:

**And I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead  
and the Life of the World to Come.  
Amen.**

We pray the prayer of Jesus in the words of Psalm 16,

**Psalm 16:8–11**

- 8 I have set the Lord always before me;  
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;  
My flesh also will rest in hope.
- 10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
- 11 You will show me the path of life;  
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;  
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Let us then pray: O Lord, you are set before us now in Your Word revealing the hope that is found for us in our Savior's resurrection. So let the prayer of our Lord be our prayer. Fill us with the fullness of joy that awaits us by showing us the path of life through our risen Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

**1. A look of confidence when we are afraid**

This confession begins first with a look of confidence when we are afraid.

It shouldn't surprise them, but it still does. Mark's gospel continues to emphasize the unexpected nature of Christ and His works. He records how the disciples gather in the upper room not just to mourn, but also to hide. They sorrow, for their Lord has left them orphans. And now they must do what is needed to protect themselves. If God couldn't protect His own Son from the Jewish leaders, why should they think he will protect them either?

But are we so different? In situations where we face the unexpected and unknown – do we react differently? What will happen next? We look into the a troublesome situation and see it clouded by sin, unable to see how this will turn out for the better. Why is it so hard to believe that God will take care of us?

Maybe one of you kids have had a bad dream that you can't seem to forget or there is something you are afraid of; something you don't want to talk about. There are uncertainties for each of us – kids, adults, seniors – that makes us afraid. Monsters – whatever they might be, even when we know they are not real, still they make us afraid. Like the disciples, we think we need to protect ourselves. We don't want to be vulnerable to certain people, certain situations. We don't want to talk about it; we won't ask for help; and we're more likely to lash out at others, in defense mode rather than opening ourselves up to the uncertainty of the situation. We've been hurt before and if God couldn't protect his own Son, what makes us think he will protect us?

No matter how real it seemed to that 6 year old, we respond: it was just a dream. But Jesus says, this is no dream; it is a prayer; my last and final prayer – because I know what comes next:

8      *I have set the Lord always before me;  
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.*

Jesus will not be moved, for the LORD is before him always. He will not be shaken, even by the threats of death; his resolve will not totter while fastened to that cross in our sins. He made himself vulnerable to the worst that anyone could do to him; suffering the curse of our sins. And as he laid down his life for our salvation, he would not be moved. He would not be moved from his love for us or his trust in God to deliver him in death. The God who created him flesh and blood, a being never meant to part from his body; and God would take his right hand in that fearful last moment – grabbing hold of his right hand in death and lifting him out of the grave that Easter morning. So the dream of that 6 year old was no mere dream; it was a last and final confession of faith –

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## **2. A look of hope when we suffer**

A look toward the resurrection. It begins with a look of confidence when we are afraid; but it continues with a look of hope when we suffer.

It should not come as a surprise, but still it does. When the American Cancer Society estimates that 1 in every 79 children born this day will be diagnosed with some form of leukemia at some time in their life, it shouldn't surprise us when it strikes close to home, but still it does. When it is estimated that in 2014 there were approximately 327 thousand people living with, or in remission from leukemia in the United States and it strikes us, it should not surprise us, but still it does. Suffering is not something people want nor is it something people expect should happen to them. But still it does.

Where will we look for hope in such times?

It was in early February that Jim would start to ask himself such questions. Some of you may know Pastor James Sandeen. He was a pastor of this congregation for a time. And now that he has reached retirement, he is finding rest a hard thing to come by. Today he enters his 52nd day of treatment for an acute form of leukemia – a type of fast moving cancer which originates in his bone marrow. A rather unexpected shift in events. Rather than looking forward to the comforts of retirement in Kentucky, he is looking for match for a bone marrow transplant not knowing how long it will be before he finds one. Where will Jim look for hope at such a time?

Or for that matter, where will any of us look? We each can expect it. Maybe not leukemia, but some form of suffering. All flesh is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades. The more we might ignore it or try to put it off or try to excuse it away, the more likely it is that one day we will wake up and not know where to look?

What is the suffering you wake up to? Is it waking up to a crying baby at 2:00 am.? Is it waking up to a sickness in the morning? Is it waking up in the hospital and not knowing what time of day it is? We might do what we can to ignore it. To put it off. To excuse it away. To imagine we can handle it ourselves.

And we say to that 6 year old – it was just a dream. But Jesus says, this is no dream; it is a prayer; my last and final prayer – because I know what comes next:

- 9        *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;*  
          *My flesh also will rest in hope.*  
10       *For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,*  
          *Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

Jesus never had a chance to wake up that Friday morning. For he had never had a chance to sleep. While his disciples were dozing that Thursday evening, Jesus was praying. They had come to the Garden of Gethsemene to pray. He had told them, stay

with me and pray. Watch with me and be alert, for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. But only Jesus would stay awake. And he prayed that His Father's will would be done. Only Jesus would face this suffering rightly; the demand of being perfect; of resisting any temptation to flee the suffering. And from there he would spend the next 24 hours awake, alert – shackled in our sins, condemned in our guilt, and fastened to the cross in our death. But His heart was glad for this; his whole being rejoices; his flesh rests in hope. He lays down to sleep in Sheol, his body resting in the grave, but not without hope – So he prays: "My flesh will rest in hope." And he entrusts himself to the hands of His heavenly Father who will not allow him to see corruption.

So the dream of that 6 year old was no mere dream; it was a last and final confession of faith –

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### **3. A look toward the resurrection when we face death**

A look toward the resurrection. It begins with a look of confidence when we are afraid; but it continues with a look of hope when we suffer. And concludes with a last and final look toward the resurrection in the face of death.

As I was preparing my sermon for today, I happened to be searching through my emails for something and accidentally clicked on a folder entitled "Cameron." In it I found a collection of emails from the month of June 2013 – the month when Jeff Cameron, a member of ours, a young father of three, died of heart complications. And I remembered the emptiness.

There is an emptiness in death. Death is a hollow cave that echoes with memories of what once was. I remember the emptiness – the empty feeling when I got that phone call from the hospital; the empty moments when I met with the family; the empty words as I tried to find something to say that would console Melissa. And I am sure for Melissa it was one of those experiences where you wake up the next day hoping it was a dream and realizing it wasn't.

Can anyone fill that emptiness; that hollow cave which echoes with memories of what once was?

We need to sit down to breakfast, and join that confession of faith: "I had a dream that I went back in time and saw Jesus on the cross. Everyone was sad, but I was happy because I knew what happened next!"

And Jesus says, yes, you do know what happens next. This is no dream; it is a prayer; our last and final prayer – because along with Jesus, we know what comes next:

11     *You will show me the path of life;  
      In Your presence is fullness of joy;  
      At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

God must empty us before he can fill us. And that emptying happens when we realize there is nothing we can do to stop death. It is a curse and a result of the sin we have brought into this world. There is nothing we can do to stop death. The grass withers, the flower fades away and we are emptied of any hope we would ourselves.

But this is where God fills us. When we are empty. When we see that the paths of this life that we have gone down have lead us to dead ends, God reveals another path. A path that leads to life.

Their feet take them swiftly to down the path and they peer in to see if it is so. John is faster and gets there first; he bends down to look in the cave and sees the linen cloths folded neatly. Peter crawls right in. Nothing left but the echoes of an empty cave.

The path to that cave will not lead to life. The path to that grave is the path to Sheol and the more we look into it, the more we be left with empty echoes of what once was. Darkness.

It wasn't until she turned away back down that garden path that she found it. Mary was lingering, bewildered by what she had found. And along that garden path she found it. The path to life. The man she at first thinks is the gardener, speaks her name and she finds the path to life has lead her to Him; there in the presence of the living Jesus is fullness of joy. No echoes, but rather a living voice which bids you awaken and rise.

The time to wake up is now. To realize that every day is day where we prepare for what is to come. Every day is a day to give thanks. To come to the Garden with Jesus and pray for God's will to be done. Every day, no matter how you might be afraid, no matter how you might suffer, no matter how you might sin – every day is a day to wake up and remember the dream of that 6 year old – for you know that he died for you to take away all your sins; and you know what happens next.

We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

In this faith we can live our life as a final and last statement, a constant confession, prayer of promise. We can live our life looking, always looking, in every situation – fearful, suffering, dying – always looking for the resurrection in every situation, anticipating it, expecting it, because we know what happens next.

And we see just such a look in Jim; in Pastor Sandeen we see a Christian living just such a confession. In a recent email, he says this,

As we wait on the Lord's will for us, Carol & I are encouraged and find good hope in how gracious the Lord has been to us these past weeks, not only in blessing me with immediate & effective treatment through modern cancer medicine, not only in wonderfully preserving me from the side-effects that can accompany cancer treatments, but especially in assuring us through Word & Sacrament of His everlasting love for us, which will strengthen us through these next days. And we are blessed that all of our family and all of you know the Lord's ultimate good and gracious will for each of us, which assures of divine remission through His Son's cross, and justification through His resurrection from the dead, which puts absolutely everything in a confident perspective!

This is what fills us. In Your presence is fullness of joy. In another word, contentment. For the path to Jesus is the path to the fullness of joy. It is the path that Jeff traveled in his baptism. It is the path that you travel in your baptism. It is the path of life that joins us all together in Christ.

As much as those emails, those words, those memories echo about in the empty cave left in the Cameron's lives, Jesus shows the path to something that will fill the void. He says, do not stay in that empty cave Peter; come out and look up and see Me – see me living and forgiving and filling you with the joy of my presence. Look up and receive the bread and wine which joins you to me. Look up and look forward and see where I sit: for I am at the right hand of God, with all power and all comfort and I will raise the living and the dead on the last day and give to you and all believers, to Peter and Jim and Jeff, eternal life. Look here into this prayer and this dream and see what happens next: a resurrection and new creation. The last and final prayer of that defines the life of a Christian.

Say it with me and say amen with certainty:

**And I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead  
and the Life of the World to Come.**

**Amen.**