

An Easter sermon for all seasons

I Cor 15: 17-20.

- A. What happened two months ago? (give example) Two weeks ago? (give example) What happened two days ago? (give example) Events fade. We forget. Even holidays, religious and secular, can lose the fire and fervor of their original purpose. True for Christian holidays, too, like Christmas and Easter. We become distracted with preparations, food, gifts, and events, losing track of the reason for the season.
- B. What about Christmas? At Christmas we celebrate that God became truly human. Although Christmas is the biggest and most widely recognized Christian holiday, Easter ought to be because Easter is the event which determines all other events. Easter is the end of all the past, the beginning of all the future. In the cross and resurrection. Our whole Christian faith centers and is based on Easter. Resurrection is not a pipe dream. 1 Cor. 15:17-20. The big change: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead..." (1 Cor 15:20a). When the resurrected Christ appears to the disciples as they are gathered together, Luke 24:41 states that the disciples "disbelieved for joy." He is risen!
- C. The big three:
 1. Death is defeated. God's new world dawns. We don't face death, because it is impossible to face it. Try to find things that will make life continue. The hydra and the jelly fish never die. They can reverse themselves and go back to stem cells. Recall the Struldbruggs from trip three of *Gulliver's Travels*. They are immortal but age as though they were mortal and are thus miserable. "Change and decay in all around I see," ("Abide with me"). That's all changed. Decay and death are defeated. Ps 46:4: "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God." There is a new world coming. New life, real life.
 2. Sin is over, and forgiveness is in place. 2 Cor 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Read and repeat.
 3. The devil is defeated, and Christ is Lord of all. Luke 10:18: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." The victory is won.
- D. This is all beyond us, beyond our thinking, beyond our wildest dreams. More than winning the lottery. Like having a fifth dimension. Consider the astonishing sense of smell that dogs have. They can smell things we humans cannot perceive. They can sense things that we are totally unaware of. Some dogs have a sense of smell that is 200,000 times stronger than the human sense of smell. We hear "a different drummer" (Thoreau, Walden). Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" In other words, how much more

will the Lord do? He will give us all things with him. What can separate us from our Lord and his kingdom? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword? None of these can. Paul puts it this way: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Rom 8:37). Imagine: More than conquerors! With the disciples we disbelieve for joy.

- E. What about now? On the one hand, Matt. 3:9: "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." And Heb 13:14: "For here we have no abiding city, but we seek the city which is to come." On the other hand, we are guided by Paul in Phil 1:23: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." We are needed here. Others have need of us. We are called upon not simply to drift along. We're called upon to care for individuals in our families and those in need around us.
- G. All summed up 1 Cor 15:51-57. "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death where is thy victory?" O death, where is thy sting?" Rev. 21:4: No more dyin' and no more cryin', reflecting Isa 25:8: "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces."