

OAKRIDGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

March 27, 2016

## Easter Sunday

### "Resurrection Victory"

Luke 24: 1-12

Rev. Ed Hoekstra.

**Winning the victory without fighting the battle:** There was a little village in Austria which was about to be conquered by Napoleon's army. It was Easter Sunday and the bells of the church were sounding throughout the countryside. The bells were celebrating that 'Christ has risen'! Napoleon thought that the sound he was hearing was the Austrian army arriving. Napoleon then retreated and peace reigned in the village and countryside. The people of that village became victorious even though they did not fight the battle.

We too have won the victory through Christ. This victory is greater than any victory we can imagine in life. Christ rising from the dead means that life will always win over death, and good will always win over evil – no matter how terrible the circumstances may become. We have won the Resurrection victory! Because God in Jesus Christ conquered sin and death and anything that leads to death, we too rise with Christ as victorious without fighting the battle!

**Forgetting the words of Jesus.** In today's Bible lesson from Luke 24, we read about the exciting and surprising account of the Resurrection of Jesus. The woman who came would have already been surprised by the stone being rolled away. Then to not see Jesus body would have shocked them some more. Then next thing was the appearance of the dazzling angels. Then the angels ask the strange question, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" The whole experience would make them wonder if what they were experiencing was actually happening or was this a dream? Then the angels say the unbelievable, "He is not here, but is risen" – I believe the most important life transforming message anyone in the history of the world would ever hear. Let's say it to one another, He is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Then the angels said, "*Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.*" The scripture goes on to say, "*then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.*" Sometimes we are told important information and it does not register because we did not quite understand. Now these women see this amazing event happen, they are reminded about it by the angels, and the pieces finally fit together. Sometimes we need to have a surprising/shocking thing to happen to us in order for a message to stick.

**'There must be something to this'..(Peter was curious).** Then the women go to where the other disciples are, but the disciples see their testimony as 'idle talk'. They dismissed the women's testimony. It is important to note, that in the Hebrew culture at that time, testimony by a woman was not viewed as reliable. Peter, however, probably agreed with the others, but

he thought there may be something to this extraordinary story. He runs over and sees the empty tomb and grave cloths and is puzzled shaking his head. Peter was still not convinced but definitely curious.

**The crucified and the Risen Christ means hope!** Theologian Jurgen Moltmann has experienced in his Christian life that hope is anticipated joy. According to Moltmann, hope in the risen Christ gives true joy in life. Jurgen describes hope as anticipated joy, whereas, anxiety is anticipated terror. When Moltmann was a German soldier, he remembered feeling forsaken by God in the midst of the war. Moltmann's home town of Hamburg was being bombed by British aircraft. Later when Moltmann was in a prison camp in Scotland, he was curious about what the Bible had to say about his situation if anything. He read from the Gospel of Mark about Christ who cried out from the cross, 'My God, My God why have you forsaken me', Moltmann knew at that moment that the God of the universe experienced what he experienced. In other words, God loves each one of us that he willingly became one with us by experiencing the most difficult part of life – rejection, suffering and death on behalf of each one of us. This gave Moltmann hope at a time when he was going down the road of self-destruction. This hope gave him anticipated joy. His life was turned around. Dear friends, the story of the death and resurrection of God in Jesus Christ is about a hope that leads to joy!

**How do we inspire others to be curious about faith?** We live in a world of high anxiety. As Moltmann stated anxiety is anticipated terror or anticipated punishment. Joy is a feeling everyone desires, but it is so elusive in a fear based, anxiety ridden world. Certainly, there is so much to fear, and we can always find out more things and individuals to be afraid of. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not fear based but love based. Every Sunday is a day of resurrection victory – a day that reminds us to be love based. We are called to remember that Christ is risen -he is risen indeed! Worship on the day of resurrection brings us back to the reality of knowing that nothing in this world, no evil or suffering can separate us from the love of God found in Jesus Christ. This knowledge empowers us as God's children to be conduits of his unconditional love – in other words to be the way of carrying God's grace to our neighbours. We inspire others by being dispensers of God's Grace! Friends: The living Christ knows your hurts and fears – he has experienced them! Place your suffering and disappointments with Christ, and allow the healing touch of one who defeated sin and death and everything that leads to death live in you! Live this resurrection victory in Jesus! Thanks be to God!  
Amen.