

Because He lives

John 14:15-21

May 17, 2020

Opening:

Hi There! I miss you here at the church sanctuary. It is not same here with you, for sure. I miss you singing with me. I miss singing with you here. I miss the chancel choir and treble choir singing here at the sanctuary. I miss the bell choir ringing here at the sanctuary, as well.

Imagine that we all here at the sanctuary and sing this hymn, "Because He lives" Many of you know this hymn, I am sure.

It goes, "God sent His son. They called Him Jesus. He came to love, heal and forgive. He lived and died to buy my pardon. An empty grave is there to prove my savior lives. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because He lives.

This hymn must be based on the Words of God we heard this morning from the gospel of John 14:19. "Because I live, you will also live." This is Jesus' promise. This is the foundation of our Christian faith. No Easter, no faith. No Easter faith, no Christian life. We, Easter people not only celebrate Easter, but also live Easter life.

We are in a very strange but confusing time of the global pandemic crisis. Everything has been turned upside down. Now many of us suffer from cabin fever. We are informed that many people suffer from mental and emotional illness these days. We are uncertain of our future. Surely it will not be the same even when we return to new normalcy. We all know that many are unemployed now and struggling financially. Economy has been down, deep down. There seems no lights, if there are

any, at the end of the tunnel. In this dark and distressful time, however, we sing aloud, “Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future and life is worth the living, just because He lives.”

I am thankful that we do have this empowering and inspiring hymn to sing. Keep singing this hymn daily, and your faith will be renewed and able to face tomorrow boldly and confidently.

1.1

Questions. How do you know, “because he lives all fear is gone”? What do you mean by saying, “I can face tomorrow because he lives?” I think Jesus answers to these question in the verse 20, which reads, “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” In another words, he says, “I am with you and you are with me.”

What Jesus is saying awakens us to know that all fear is gone because we are not alone. We can face tomorrow because we are not alone. All fear is gone because I am loved by Christ. I can face tomorrow because Christ loves me.

How often lately do we fall into a state of being discouraged and demotivated and depressed? How often do we wonder what the future would look like and what it would bring to you and your family and our church life? This pandemic crisis seems to push us down deeper and deeper and make us feel perplexed and lost. Doesn't it?

But thanks to be God, today, we are reminded that God not only notices where we are and what we go through, but also loves us dearly. And further, God walks with us and talks with us and journey with us all the way. Because he lives, we all will live. Hallelujah! Amen.

1.2

Hear Christ saying one more time in verse 20. "I am in my Father," says Christ to us, "and you are in me, and I am in you." Did you hear that? Christ is within us. Where is Christ? Where is God? God is within us. Wow. This is a good news to all. We don't have to go to a mountaintop to find God. We don't have to peer through the Hubble telescope to find God. All we have to do is to listen for the Divine whisper from within ourselves.

A five year old girl told her parents, "Mom and Dad, I know Jesus lives in my heart, because when I put my hand on it I can feel him walking around in there." Wow. How true it is.

One of the early Christians whose name is Theophan the Recluse, said, "Find a place in your heart and speak there with the Lord. It is the Lord's reception room." Some people seem to find this room easily. Others have more difficulty. But surely this room is there for you and me. In this inner room we may be able to speak with God and hear God speaking to us.

Most people believe in God. But many people think God is somewhere "out there." They do not see God who dwells within them. To them, God is understood as somebody lives far away from here and has no concern about their everyday cares and concerns. They have never seen God as a living presence in their lives here and now.

A story of a mother. She rather than asking her children the question: "How was your day?" did something much deeper. At the dinner table, she asked them this question: "Where did you meet God today?"

In answer to her question about where they met God, they would answer, one by one: "A teacher helped me; there was a homeless person

in the park; I saw a tree with lots of flowers on it.” After they finished telling her where they had met God that day, she would tell them where she met God, too.

What a wonderful daily exercise! Where did you meet God lately? Where do you see God working these days? At hospitals? At the supermarkets? At the dinner table?

Because Christ lives within us, we can speak with him. Because Christ lives with us, we can see Christ teaching, empowering and encouraging in our lives here and now. Summing up, because Christ lives, we can face tomorrow.

2

One more. Because Christ lives, we also can face death.

Mass media keep providing the numbers of those infected and those died due to the coronavirus. How many death so far due to the Covid-19 pandemic? You probably keep up with those numbers. More than 300,000 people, exactly 309,000 in the world. More than 88,000, 88,237 exactly in the United States. More than 22,000 in New York. More than 3,200 in Connecticut. 935 in the Fairfield County. These numbers comes to us as a warning sign.

Surely we need to wash our hands frequently, keep the 6 feet physical distancing and wearing the face coverings or masks. We do all things we can do to protect not only ourselves, but also others. This is what we do as Methodist Christians. Do good and do no harm.

But as I hear these numbers of death, I wonder whether we have not been overcome by the power of death and let down by it.

Who would like to die? We want to live longer here in the world. Don't we? Who would like to die by being infected by the coronavirus? No one, for sure.

Death is something we all like to avoid as long as possible. So we are thankful that we live in the medically advanced 21st century. The life expectancy is longer than any other centuries. According to the 2020 data, 79 years is the life expectancy in the United States.

We, however do know no one can avoid death. Sooner or later, we will all face it and die when our time comes. That is God's upper story. It does not mean that we will be victimized helplessly by the power of death and fall into eternal sleep. It means we will all be changed and have a new beginning in the life beyond death.

Paul says, "51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

Last Friday I led a gravesite service for Emma Gilbert, one of our longtime faithful members. It was sad that we all were not able to gather to celebrate her life and ministry at Fairfield Grace. But I was glad that I was able to be there and remind myself and her 10 family members and friends of our faith in the living Christ and the resurrection of the body.

I shouted boldly and confidently in the beginning of the service, "55 Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to

God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Because Christ lives, death is not something we should be afraid of. Death is not the final destination of our faith journey. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” (John 11:25)

Because Christ lives, we also will live. Because Christ lives, we do not only face tomorrow in this world, but also face death in the life beyond death. Hallelujah!

Closing

Let me finish this message with sharing the content of a screen shot sent by Sandra Brown, one of us the other day. It reads, “Make sure you test positive for Faith. Keep your distance from Doubt, and isolate yourself from Fear. Trust in God through it all.” And God will take care of you.”

Amen. Amen. Amen.”