

He's Alive

John 20:17

Preface

Illus: Cardboard Testimonies

This morning you have seen powerful testimonies of how God has changed people's lives. In some cases his work has been miraculous. In others it has been his soft assurance and healing of the heart. In every testimony, it is the grace of a loving God who has brought us through.

Today is Easter and the time when we typically read the Easter story and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. This past week as I read the resurrection of our Lord in all four gospels, I read John 20:17 and would like for us to read it together today.

Scripture

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" John 20:17 NIV

Introduction

Jesus said he was "returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." This verse helps me realize how Easter is meant to be a highly personal experience. Easter is the bridge that allows us to come to God; our Father.

Jesus is saying, His father is our father.

Illus: When I was a teenager we had a large youth choir at Friendship Baptist Church in Grand Bay Alabama. Every summer we went on a youth choir tour. We went all out with matching clothes, props, lights and sound equipment. The tour usually lasted about a week as we sang in different churches and stayed in people's homes. It was a great experience.

One year we were doing the musical "Celebrate Life" and at a certain point in the program the entire choir was to come down from the platform and sort of run down the aisles shouting "He's Alive, He's Alive!" One particular night, an enthusiastic choir

member jumped the gun on us. One verse too early, he when went running down the aisle waving his arms and shouting "He's Alive, He's Alive!"

He was so enthusiastic about it that he never realized he was all alone until he got all the way to the very back of the auditorium. When he got to the back he looked up and realized what he had done. The entire choir stood there wondering what he would do. I think I would have just ran on out the back door and waited in the bus.

He walked back to the front still shouting "He's Alive!" It was at the next verse that the entire choir went down shouting "He's Alive, He's Alive!"

My friend's experience did not deter him as he is the Pastor of a church today. Through the years I have thought about that night many times. For that lonely moment, Jesus was alive for my friend even if for no one else. For all of us, there are those special moments when God is our Lord; when His presence means everything to us even if to no one else around us.

Content

1. Easter makes sin conquerable

The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sin separates us from God. But Jesus Christ is the atonement for our sin.

Because of Easter, sin was conquered once and for all. You and I can have victory over sin because of Christ. You do not have to be in bondage or burdened with the guilt of sin. God is eager to forgive.

2. Easter makes life spiritual

Because of Easter, life takes on new meaning, higher more spiritual meaning. When we receive the gift of salvation, we receive God's Holy Spirit alive within us.

Life is no longer left to chance or to our own engineering. We become the children of God walking and living by faith.

We place our trust in God for our direction and guidance. We become empty vessels to be filled by Him for His service.

3. Easter makes life eternal

When I speak at funerals, I like to speak personally about the person who has passed away. I never use the same message and I speak of my personal experiences with the deceased and my conversations with them about their relationship with God. The message is always tailored around the person and God.

At the graveside however, I usually say the same thing.

“There is no soul here today, just a worn out body. Death has not conquered. With Christ, death can hiss but it cannot harm. Because of Christ, death is not to be feared.”

⁵⁵ *O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?...*
⁵⁷ *but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor. 15:55, 57*

For Jesus said, “..I go to prepare a place for you.” *John 14:2*

4. Easter makes God personal

Easter is a dividing point from the old to the new; from separation from God to unity with God.

Because of the resurrection, we become united in the holy relationship that exists between the Son and the Father. The Father of Christ becomes the Father of Bill, Mary and Joe.

As we have seen in the testimonies this morning God works in the life of His children in a very personal way.

Whatever the struggle, whatever the hardship, whatever the challenge, whatever the opportunity; a very personal God will be there with His children.

Conclusion

One night this week I had a dream. Many of you were in that dream. I dreamed that Barry Nix came by, picked me up and said he wanted to take me somewhere. When I inquired about where we were going he would only say, “You’ll see.”

We arrived at a large field where there were numerous tables setup along with ice chests and boxes of food. There was a long open pit grill that had been built and the fire was already roaring in the pit.

Within minutes many of you arrived and started cooking all sorts of meats and side dishes. As I was standing by Barry at the long BBQ pit, I kept asking what this was all about and Barry just said, “You’ll see.”

It was about dusk and at one point I looked up and saw a long line of cars coming down the road with their lights on. I commented to someone that surely all of those cars were not coming to the cookout. But they were. In minutes the field was filled with vehicles and people.

For the next couple of hours I visited with people. Everyone was having a great time eating and sharing conversations. It was strange because all the people there were people I knew. There were people from Barnwell, Fairhope, Orange Beach, Grand Bay and Petal Mississippi; all places I have lived. There were even old college friends and professors there.

I began to wonder to myself, “Was this huge event thrown for me? Why else would there be people from all the places I have lived? But, why would they do all this for me? I am past 50, it isn’t some significant date in my life. I haven’t done anything special or deserving of any recognition. So, why are they doing this in my honor? Are they even doing this for me?”

I decided to find Barry Nix and ask him. He would know and I can just come right out and ask if this is all for me. I began to search for Barry.

As I was searching through the crowd looking for him, I woke up. I never knew what the big event was all about. I never knew if it was really for me or not.

Many people go through life participating in the celebration of Easter but never realizing it is all for them. They dress up and attend church. They participate in the festivities but they miss the most important fact about Easter. It is for them.

Easter is for you. Jesus Christ died on the cross and was resurrected so that you can be forgiven of your sins and have complete and personal fellowship with God.

Easter is the pinnacle of God’s plan of salvation and life for you.
Don’t leave the party without knowing it is for you.