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Psalm 22:22-31

Second Message

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FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

Christians around the world will gather today to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The resurrection of Jesus, of course, is the great event that sets Christianity apart from all other religions. As Christians, we do not gather around a creed, an ancient teacher or a prophet. We follow a Savior who conquered death, a Savior who is alive and is still in business.

Traditionally, on Easter Sunday Christians recall the significance of the events of the resurrection from the perspective of the first eye-witnesses of the risen Christ. Early on that Sunday following Passover, the two Marys came to the tomb of Jesus, carrying with them spices to anoint his body. But to their amazement the stone was rolled away and the body was gone—stolen, they thought. Then the angels announced, “He is not here. He is risen.” The women ran and brought news of this wondrous announcement to the twelve. They did not believe at first, but then, when Jesus appeared to them, they were filled with awe and fear. The resurrection so radically changed their lives they became transformed from fearful cowards into bold witnesses. In but a few weeks’ time were willing to face death for the cause of Christ.

This morning I want to take a different approach to the resurrection, however. Instead of viewing the event from the perspective of Jesus’ friends and disciples, I would like to look it from the Lord’s own perspective. How important was the resurrection to him, and how did it affect his soul? The book of Hebrews says that “for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.” Joy and shame, conflicting emotions, resonated within his soul as he faced the cross.

In our opening study of Psalm 22 on Palm Sunday, we looked at the shame of the cross and how the terrible trauma of that hour tore at the soul of Christ. Like a devouring beast, the prospect of the crucifixion shredded his faith, which was based on past events. Jesus came to the conclusion that, unlike other kings of Israel before him, he would receive no vindication in this life. God would lay him in the dust of death.

At that point, when the trauma he was suffering had almost swallowed his last residue of faith, Jesus had a vision of the future: He would be vindicated in the resurrection. Then, following the resurrection, as Israel’s King he would take on three roles: as a Herald of the gospel, as a Host at a banqueting table, and finally, as the Heir of an everlasting kingdom. Just as the trauma of the cross had intensified in his spirit as labor pains unto death, so now his capacity for joy would intensify with each new role. The vision of this coming joy so strengthened Jesus that he could set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem to his own execution. There he would turn himself over to the forces of hell. He would face rejection, be spat upon, mocked and accused of being a phony. He would be scourged, crucified, and finally abandoned by God himself. At last, as he languished on the cross, he would utter the desperate cry, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” (“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”). What was the

source of the joy that strengthened Jesus to such a degree that he could face so shameful a death?

In our study today in the final verses of Psalm 22 we will find the answer to this question. King David, writing a thousand years before Christ, wrote:

I. The Joy of Being a Herald (22:22-24)

**I will tell of Your name to my brothers;
In the midst of the assembly, I will praise You.
You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
All you seed of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you seed of Israel.
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Neither has He hid His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard. (NASB)**

(a) The First to Bear the News (22:22, 24)

Under the Davidic covenant in the Old Testament, when a king was crowned over Israel, God adopted him into a Father-son relationship. And prayer was the unique vehicle by which the king would spread God’s rule. God had said, “Ask of me and I will give you the ends of the earth as your inheritance.” In fifty of the psalms, it is obvious that the king was facing a crisis. He prayed for help and God heard his prayers and spared his life. Then the king went back to the congregation to “recount” and “praise” the loyal-love of the God who had vindicated the love relationship between the Father and his son.

But in the crucifixion, Jesus faced the ultimate test: death itself. There would be no vindication for him in this life. He could “count” his bones, but that was all (v. 17). Yet he went through death and disarmed the power of hell. The whole world despised him, but not God. God fulfilled his word. He kept covenant with this King. F.F. Bruce comments, “As he was suspended there, bound hand and foot to the wood in apparent weakness, they imagined they had him at their mercy, and flung themselves upon him with hostile intent... But he grappled with them and mastered them.”

God had fulfilled his promise to Jesus in the resurrection. The result was that Christ had the privilege of declaring God’s praise among the congregation of apostles. This is the significance of the 40 days of resurrection appearances, when Jesus first appeared to the women, then to Mary Magdalene, then to the eleven, then to the 500.

Ten years ago, following the birth of our fourth child, I had opportunity to recount the faithfulness of God. Because my wife and I have an enzyme deficiency, during pregnancies our faith was always put to the test. I was college pastor at Stanford University back then, and 48 members of our group committed to praying for 24 hours for our baby. When she was born, we received the test results showing that she was healthy during the time when the group was praying.

That was when I felt privileged to be able to go back to the congregation of 48 to recount the goodness of God who had heard their prayers for our daughter.

When Jesus returned from the grave, God did not send a memo to the congregation heralding the good news. He sent Jesus himself to relate the wonder of God's faithfulness.

And here is what he said.

(b) The First to Lead in Praise (22:23)

**You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
All you seed of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you seed of Israel.**

Jesus was the first to lead Israel in praise, glory and awe of God. If the resurrection was awe-inspiring to the disciples of Jesus, imagine how awe-inspiring it was to Jesus himself. So touched was he by the event that he became the leader of all Christian worship. He could not contain his awe and wonder at the event. This was why he was present at that first Easter worship service. God had not abandoned him; he had heard his prayers. The cross overthrew all the world forces of darkness. This is why the psalm says, "Glorify him." Give him honor, in other words. It is a fearful thing to stand in the presence of the God who raises the dead, however. This was why the first words of Jesus to Mary and the disciples were, "Do not fear."

So Jesus had the joy of being a herald, and he had the privilege of being the first to make the proclamation of the resurrection. He is personally speaking to each one of us today, proclaiming that he is alive, that God heard his prayer. In return, he wants to see the glory on your face and hear the praise of your lips.

Second, Jesus had the joy of being the host at the banqueting table.

II. The Joy of Being the Host at the Feast (22:25-26)

**From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.
The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
"Let your heart live forever!"**

(a) The King Pays His Vows

Following his answered prayer, the king also offered a sacrifice to pay his vows. One-third was to be offered on the altar; one-third given to the priest; and one-third taken home for a three-day feast of celebration—a meal to be enjoyed for three days.

(b) The King Prepares a Feast

The invitation was made in a special way to the poor. The king prepared a feast, seated his guests, and then offered a toast, "May your heart live forever." He offered his guests eternal life in the heart. All the guests ate until they were sated with joy and they sang out in praise of God.

In the gospels there are many references to feasting. At the wedding feast at Cana, for instance, Jesus turned water into wine. In the Upper Room it is significant that Jesus redefined the Seder meal, reducing it to just two elements: the bread (representing the escape from Egypt), and the wine (the third cup of redemption). Thus in the resurrection appearances he not only appeared to the disciples, but ate with them—in Jerusalem, on the road to Emmaus, and with Peter at the Sea of Galilee. It was not enough to bring the good news to them, he wanted them to enjoy eternal life, to be sated with it.

And he wants the same for us. Eternal life is so rich it is meant to be shared. This is why the witnesses were seen eating at all of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. They were increasing the joy that began with the king and now was working out through the congregation.

We see this clearly in the New Testament. So overcome were the apostles with the joy of eternal life that earthly power and possessions, even their very lives, meant nothing to them anymore. All of them were martyred for the cause of Christ. It is a very special thing to see the afflicted and the poor eating at the table of Christ. No matter whether the affliction is sickness, death, financial crisis, whatever, the afflicted find that meal more precious than all the possessions of earth, more precious even than life itself.

Bob Corrado is a long-time member of this church. Today he is lying in a hospital bed, suffering from a tumor on his spine. He faces a long series of radiation treatments and chemotherapy. I don't know what his prognosis is, but I can tell you how he is doing. When I called and asked him, he said, "I'm feasting on God's love. God has been dealing with things in my life I have never dealt with. It tastes very sweet to me." The afflicted one is eating the meal prepared for him by the resurrected Christ.

The Father honors his Son by commissioning him as the first herald, and then as the ultimate host. His final joy is being an heir.

III. The Joy of Being the Heir (22:27-31)

(a) Heir of a Universal Kingdom (22:27-29)

**All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations will worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
All the fat ones of the earth will eat and worship,
All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.**

When Christ was crucified, he was mockingly given the title "King of the Jews." When he was raised, however, it was not just as King of the Jews, but as Sovereign over all the nations. The resurrection established his sovereignty as heir of this new kingdom made up of all the nations. Notice that the rule of this kingdom is not spread by coercion. It says, "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD...and will worship before you." As they recall this one act, the loyal-love of God toward the Son, then they will willingly turn (repent) to the LORD and worship him.

There are no national distinctions in this kingdom. It will extend to the "ends of the earth." There is no holy land to defend. The whole earth will come. Willingly remembering this one deed, they will repent (turn) and worship.

And there are no racial distinctions in this kingdom. It says, "And all the families of the nations will worship before You." No legislation will be required to coerce people to let go of racial distinctions. Because of this one event, people will come willingly to this resurrected King when they see how God vindicated his servant in the resurrection.

And third, there are no class distinctions: "All the fat ones of the earth will eat and worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive." Class distinction, the conflict between the rich and the poor, is the root of most of the oppression we see on every side today. But at this table, rich and poor are united. The fat ones, those who are rich in the

world's goods, will lay aside their pride and humbly chose to sit next to the poor man. I have seen this happen as wealthy Christians from this church let go of their possessions and traveled to poor Romania to worship together and share the Lord's Table with the poor of that land.

But the most beautiful scene of all is when the rich of the earth sit next to the one who cannot even keep his soul alive, the one whose soul is about to be laid in the dust. In January of 1989, I was in Jerusalem when my wife telephoned me to say that her sister Melanie was dying of AIDS. On my return home, I telephoned my wife from Chicago and she told me that a dear friend of mine who is a doctor had led Melanie to Christ. When at last I was able to visit her in the hospital, my friend was sitting by her bed, baptizing my dying sister-in-law. The one who had the world's possessions was taking his place with the one who was ready to lay her soul in the dust. How much joy must this have given to the One who was resurrected, the Lord Jesus himself!

Christ looked forward to being heir of a universal kingdom, one that had no nationalistic, racial or class distinctions.

And it would be an everlasting kingdom.

(b) Heir of an Everlasting Kingdom (22:30-31)

A seed will serve Him;

It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.

They will come and will declare His righteousness

To a people who will be born, that he has done it!

In verse 15, Jesus had come to the conclusion that God would not vindicate him in this life. He would have no children, no family, no inheritance. "You lay me in the dust of death," he said. But in the resurrection he would have children, an eternal seed that would continue on and on. They would be born through the announcement of this one act, "he has done it." This phrase is just one word in Hebrew. This is the gospel: He did it! And it will continue down through all generations. Those who hear the message and eat become so filled with eternal life they cannot hold it in, but feel compelled to share it with the next generation. That torch has now been passed to 100 generations since Christ was resurrected, and that light has never gone out.

What did the resurrection mean to Christ? It meant the joy of seeing praise spread and reverberate. Just as when a stone is dropped into still water and the ripples spread outward in ever-increasing circles, so the gospel spread to the 500, then to Antioch, Asia Minor, Rome, Spain, and finally around the whole world.

"He did it!" "It is finished!" This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus saw us at the table. But it wasn't enough for him to speak to us and feed us, he wanted to possess us as his own forever. He wanted to look into our eyes because our tearful appreciation brought him joy: "for the joy set before He endured the cross, despising the shame."

Make his joy complete today when he comes to you as a herald. Listen to him. Look into his eyes. See the awe and praise that fills them. He is overwhelmed by the loyal-love of God. Aren't you? He is here. Listen to him.

Make his joy complete today when he comes to you as a host. He has prepared a feast of eternal life that is waiting for you, so eat until you are sated with his life.

Make his joy as an heir complete today by sharing in the work of spreading his universal kingdom. Go forth and welcome all to come and eat with you, and tell the next generation that God did it.

Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!

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