

April 15, 2018

Easter 3

Series B

ILC, Wichita, KS

Luke 24: 36-48; "A Passion for Christ"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text which forms the basis for my message today is taken from the Gospel lesson. I would like to particularly refer to Luke 24, verses 45-47 which read:

45 Then he(Jesus) opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. **46** He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations,

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

What do you have a passion for in life?

Each one of us has a passion for one aspect of life or another.

I would like to share a little story with you that might help you understand what I mean.

A man was sitting in a psychiatrist's office. He was complaining about an obsession that was ruining his life.

"It's baseball doctor", he said. "Please help me. Baseball is destroying me. I can't even get away from it in my sleep. As soon as I close my eyes, I'm out there chasing a fly ball or running around the bases. When I wake up, I'm more tired than I was when I went to bed. What am I going to do?"

The psychiatrist sat back and folded her hands.

"First of all," she said, "you have to make a conscious effort not to dream about baseball. For example, when you close your eyes, try to imagine that you are at a party at which someone is about to give you a million dollars."

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“Are you crazy, Doctor?” the patient shouted.

“I’ll miss my turn at bat!”

Sports... some people can’t live without them.

What is it that you cannot live without?

In other words... what is your passion?

Introduction: In the Gospel lesson for today... we hear about the **Passion of Christ**. Now... this phrase... **the Passion of Christ**... is not to be confused with the movie with the same name.

By the words: **“The Passion of Christ”** the Gospel is sharing with us... what Christ wants His church to have as her passion. Sharing the Good News of how Jesus has saved us from our sins.

The Gospel takes place on that first Easter evening. Jesus had appeared to His disciples as they were gathered together in a locked room. In the words that He shares our Lord concludes with these words:

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. **46** He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations,

Our Lord's last words in this discussion with His disciples told them what their mission in the future would be... and along with them... our Lord also gave us the passion of the church.

We are to teach and preach two things:

- I. **repentance**
- II. **forgiveness.**

I. **REPENTANCE**... I would like to take this little word... **repentance**... and develop it just a little.... I would like us to understand repentance as --

-- *a turning around... while we are still able.*

For instance...

-- we see a loved one who seems to be entering a destructive relationship... a relationship that could destroy his life as he knows it... and we want to intervene and *tell them...*

"Don't do this...turn around while you can.

-- or think about a person that you might have known who seems to have a very bitter or a negative attitude about life. They are the person who does not ever have a good thing to say about life. They seem to become more bitter every time we visit them... Often times we want to intervene with this person and say:

"Don't be so bitter or negative... you are driving everyone away from you by your negative attitude."

-- or think about your teenager or young person... you are very concerned about their friends. Their friends seem to be a pretty rough crowd. Their friends appear to be a group of people who just seem to be waiting to get into trouble. You want to intervene with your young person and say: *"Don't get involved with these people... turn around while you still can."*

In the Gospel for today Christ tells us that one of the main themes of Christianity is to call people

-- to turn around while you still can... to repent.

When we repent of our sins... we are becoming honest with God.

The result of such honesty with God is:

II. forgiveness... The second point Jesus made to His disciples says the duty of the disciples ... the duty of the church is to proclaim... forgiveness.

A. We do not toss this forgiveness around as if it was something casual. The forgiveness that you and I receive is a very valuable gift. For it cost Christ His life on the Cross. This forgiveness that we receive is a holy gift...

B. And as we receive this very precious gift of forgiveness... we now let this gift erase the past. God does not want us to carry the burdens of our sins... our mistakes... our errors around with us our whole lives.

Through Christ, we are able to let go of the past and begin today and rejoice.

We can rejoice for as Christ tells us in Luke 15:7, **I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.**

All of heaven rejoices when we ask for forgiveness... and so if heaven is rejoicing.... then we need to let the past be the past... and get on with growing our lives... and growing in our relationship with Christ.

Conclusion: The Gospel lesson for today gives us some powerful words for us to remember when it comes to last words.

The last words that Jesus offered his disciples on the first Easter evening are the same words I would like for you to remember as you leave church today.

“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations,

Remember the words ...repentance and forgiveness.

We have begun our week by repenting of all our past sins... we have received Christ's forgiveness.

Now go out and enjoy your life.

Enjoy your relationships with other people... and know that you are growing in your relationship with Christ.

Christ has come to bring you forgiveness, peace and strength.

May each of us grow in our relationship with the Christ who offers us this time to enjoy and rejoice in. Amen.

-- Now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.