

SERMON 851

Easter Sunday

April 20, 2014

942nd Week as Priest

768th Week at St Dunstan's

33rd Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

THERE IS MORE

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

For the Season of Lent and throughout this Holy Week, It has been my aim to have us all live the experiences of the disciples who traveled with Jesus of Nazareth during the last three years of his life. I hope that you have shared their journey and identified with the range of emotions that they must have felt.

For five weeks, we walked the Jerusalem Road from the wilderness into the City of Jerusalem. We made a pilgrimage with Our Lord Jesus Christ through the Season of Lent. You recall the experiences we shared along the way—the fear and adversity we felt when Jesus left us for a time in the wilderness, the joy and elation of his triumphal entry into the holy city, the sorrow and terrible disappointment when the

Sanhedrin turned against him. And worst of all, his death by crucifixion on that horrible Friday.

“It is what it is,” say a lot of people to explain the disappointments and tragedies of life. “It is what it is.”

I have never felt this way myself—or I’ve never been able to accept the idea that life just is what it is and nothing more. Or even more to the point, I will not accept such a hopeless and victimizing approach to the human condition. This is not why Jesus was born in Bethlehem, baptized in the Jordan, suffered under Pontius Pilate, or was crucified, died and was buried.

“It is what is it is” is defeat bordering on despair. It is a denial of Gospel truth, and I will even say a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

We Christians, you see, must never accept that things are the way they are, and that that is all they ever will be.

If this were true, and we acknowledged it as truth, then we would have to admit that we cannot change, that God cannot change us, that the love of Jesus Christ has no power over us to make of us his new creation. And we would eventually come to the belief that life is simply cruel and harsh and unfair, and that God has no ability to transform

life. We would come to the conclusion that we are simply insignificant, and that our lives are plainly of no importance whatsoever to Almighty God.

But this, you see, is heresy. It is absolutely false—and I can demonstrate it. We know that Christ died on a cross in the City of Jerusalem, sometime around the year 30 AD. It is one of the most documented facts in all of history. He was put to death by crucifixion, and it was a sentence given by the Roman procurator over Israel, in concert with the chief priests and scribes of the Temple's governing body, the Sanhedrin. "It is what it is," many would say. Too bad. Jesus was such a good guy. Such a nice man, a good teacher. I liked what he had to say.

But the story is never quite over when we are talking about Jesus of Nazareth. He surprised them all—his followers, the twelve disciples, the chief priests, the Pharisees, the Romans—everybody, it seems, even the three women who came to his tomb that Sunday morning to anoint his body for burial.

The tomb was empty! He was not there! The huge stone had been rolled away, and Jesus's body was no longer there. "It is what it is," said many people. Somebody stole the body.

It was all a fraud. He was never really dead, he just looked that way. “It is what it is.”

No, you see, it was not the way that things really were. There was more to the story than anyone believed. With Jesus, there is more than meets the eye. He was raised from the dead. Just as he said he would be.

The women saw him. The disciples saw him. They touched him. They talked with him. And he was not a ghost, an apparition, or a figment of their collective imagination. No, he was Jesus, raised from the dead!

This is the important lesson about life that we should all learn: There is more to this life than what appears to our sight, our hearing, our touch, and our smell. We believe in both the seen and the unseen. God has the power to heal us, to change us, and to show us that there is more to life than what meets the eye.

Imagine the shock, the joy, the startling realization the disciples felt when they first saw the Master returned from the grave! They saw the wounds in his hands, the wound in his side. They were afraid, naturally, but they were also certain that this was real and not a dream. And suddenly they knew that all Jesus had said, all he had promised, all he had

taught them was true. He was the way, and the truth, and the life. He was the Messiah, the King of Israel, the Anointed One, the Son of God.

And more. He was God with Us, Emmanuel. He had said that he and the Father were one. Now they knew this to be true. They saw it with their own eyes. They were eye witnesses to the Resurrection.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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