

“The Season of Easter”

Sermon by Guest Preacher Don Bidwell

PREBYTERIAN SERMON 4/15/12

GOOD MORNING AND HAPPY EASTER

ISN'T THIS A GLORIOUS EASTER DAY. I KNOW PASTOR DAVE LED WORSHIP ON EASTER SUNDAY BEFORE LEAVING FOR TEXAS AND TURNING THE PULPIT OVER TO ME FOR THIS WEEK. BEFORE WE CONTINUE TODAY'S EASTER SUNDAY CELEBRATION, LET ME TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT MYSELF. A FEW WEEKS AGO, PASTOR DAVE REFERRED TO MY HAIR-DO OR RATHER LACK OF ONE. FOR THE RADIO AUDIENCE LET ME ASSURE YOU I HAVE WAVY HAIR. THE ONE ON THE LEFT WAVES TO THE ONE ON THE RIGHT. PASTOR DAVE ALSO MENTIONED MY LUTHERAN BACKGROUND. HOWEVER THERE ARE A COUPLE OF OTHER DETAILS, I WOULD LIKE TO COVER. AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LIVING IN ASHLAND, MONTANA, I DID SUNDAY SERVICES IN A SMALL COMMUNITY METHODIST CHURCH. UPON STARTING COLLEGE HERE AT MCC I TAUGHT SUNDAY SCHOOL HERE AT 1ST PRESBYTERIAN WHILE SERVING AS A YOUTH GROUP LEADER AT THE METHODIST CHURCH. IN 1969, I WAS MARRIED AT THIS VERY CHURCH TO ARLIS VALACH. WE BECAME EDUCATORS AND ARLIS TAUGHT AND I ADMINISTERED AT SEVERAL SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL MONTANA. BEFORE ARLIS AND I MOVED TO BROADUS WHERE I SERVED AS A LAY PASTOR FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH FOR 5 YEARS UNTIL RECENTLY WHEN WE MOVED TO MILES CITY TO LIVE WITH MY MOTHER-IN LAW, MILDRED VALACH. MILLIE ISN'T HERE TO RECEIVE YOUR CONDOLENCES AS SHE STAYED WITH GRAND AND GREAT GRANDCHILDREN IN DENVER AFTER OUR TRIP TO DENVER FOR EASTER WEEKEND. NOW YOU KNOW MORE THAN YOU WANTED TO ABOUT ME. LET ME RETURN TO MY ASSERTION THAT TODAY IS INDEED EASTER SUNDAY. IN FACT THERE ARE SEVEN EASTER SUNDAYS AS ASSERTED BY PRESBYTERIAN GRADUATE STUDENT EMILY ROSE WHO GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF EASTER IS MUCH MORE THAN A COMMERCIALIZED SUNDAY AFTER WHICH WE PUT THE BUNNIES AND OTHER DECORATIONS INTO THE CLOSET AND RETURN TO NORMAL LIVING. SHE CONTINUES WITH THE THOUGHT THAT THE DISCIPLES SHOULD HAVE BEEN ELATED WITH THE NEWS OF THE RESURRECTION. INSTEAD THEY ARE LOCKED IN A SMALL ROOM IN FEAR OF THEIR LIVES. THEY ARE NOT BOLD AND EMPOWERED BY EASTER AND ITS EVENTS, RATHER THEY ARE ACTING LIKE COWARDS DUE TO THEIR FEAR OF THE JEWS AND THE TREATMENT JESUS RECEIVED. EMILY ALSO ASSERTS THAT THE DISCIPLES HAVE EARNED A BAD REPUTATION FOR THEIR ACTIONS AFTER EASTER. THEY ARE DEVASTATED BY THE EVENTS RATHER THAN OVER-JOYED WITH THE TRUTH OF JESUS' TEACHINGS. I HAVE PERSONNALLY TOLD THE STORY MORE THAN FIVE TIMES. I STILL HAVE

SOME TROUBLE WITH THE REALIZATION THAT DEATH IS NOT PERMANENT. THE DISCIPLES WERE LIKE US, SKEPTICAL, PRACTICAL AND SENSIBLE. THEY ARE MOSTLY FISHERMEN—NO NONSENSE, SALT OF THE EARTH PEOPLE. THEY ARE HAVING A BIT OF TROUBLE ACCEPTING MARY'S STORY OF THE RESURRECTION. CAN YOU BE SURE YOU WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THE STORY AS TRUE THE FIRST MINUTE YOU HEARD IT AFTER HAVING WITNESSED THE CRUCIFIXION AND HORROR OF A WEEK AGO. THEY ARE IN THIS DARK SMALL ROOM VERY FRIGHTENED AND WARY OF THE JEWS AND HE IS SUDDENLY THERE WITH THEM. HOW DID HE GET THERE. HE QUIETLY SAYS PEACE, SHALOM AND SHOWS HIS WOUNDS AND SHARES THE PEACE. HE SHARES THE PEACE MUCH AS WE WILL SHORTLY. IMAGINE THE SCOPE OF EMOTION IN THAT MOMENT AS THEY SHARE PEACE WITH HIM . THAT WOULD CONVINCED US TO BE BELIEVERS WITHOUT ANY DOUBTS. IT DIDN'T WORK THAT WAY. A WEEK LATER THEY WERE BACK IN THE DARK ROOM AFRAID AND DOUBTING. BUT JESUS RETURNS AGAIN AND ASSURES THEM HE IS PRESENT FOR ETERNITY AS PROMISED. JESUS IS NOT UPSET WITH THEM. HE SEEMS TO ACCEPT THEIR BEHAVIOUR AS EXPECTED. DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR? NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES WE LIVE THE STORY. THERE IS STILL A PART OF US THAT ASKS REALLY! REALLY!! RISEN FROM THE DEAD? REALLY?? THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT JESUS VISITS US EVERY WEEK HERE IN THIS BUILDING TO REASSURE US THAT YES HE HAS RISEN AND EASTER CONTINUES WAY BEYOND ONE COMMERCIAL WEEKEND. THANK YOU LORD JESUS FOR THE MANY WEEKS OF EASTER SUNDAYS AND BEYOND THAT YOU WILL BE HERE TO ALLEVIATE OUR FEARS AND DOUBTS AS JOHN'S GOSPEL TELLS US THAT IF WE DOUBT WHICH WE WILL, JESUS WILL RETURN WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS SO OUR EYES CAN RECOGNIZE HIM AND OUR HEARTS WILL BE FILLED WITH EASTER LIGHT ALL OVER AGAIN. AND ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN SAID AMEN!!!!!!