Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015

Theme: Peace Be With You

Scripture: John 20:21-23 (cf., vv. 1-23)

Video: Resurrection Transformation

We live in a distressing world: war in mid-east threatens a cataclysmic world war, cries of injustice and oppression in cities of USA, uproar over religious freedom act(s), economic uncertainty…

Jesus comes to us today with the same message he gave to disciples who had gathered on the evening of the third day after his crucifixion. They were cowering in fear and dismay. This message is equally valid for people angry at the developments in the world in which we live.

Jesus’ Message to his disciples:

* Peace be with you
* Go do the work God sent me to do
* Receive the Holy Spirit
* Forgive my murderers and your oppressors.

PEACE BE WITH YOU

* God has raised me to life and I am with you
* “Why are you frightened? Why are your hearts filled with doubt?” (Luke 24:38)
  + same message when disciples panicked in storms (Luke 8.25)
  + “Don’t be afraid. I am here!” (John 6:20)
  + “You of little faith. Why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31)
* My opponents are still angry and want to shut you up
* Whatever your storm is today, the resurrected Christ is with you. You are not alone.

CONTINUE DOING THE WORK GOD SENT ME TO DO

* The message is still the same: “the kingdom of heaven is near.”

“Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!” (Matthew 10:7-8, NLT)

* The world still wants to dilute the standard of God for his people and settle for Christianity as some good works that qualify us to go to heaven when we die.
  + 92% of Americans claim belief in Jesus
  + most believe the will go to heaven when they die
  + most believe they qualify for heaven because of their goodness but want to define being good within the standard of what they think is right.
* NCCN: you are the front line of mission for Christianity and our church
  + The message? The kingdom of heaven is here through Jesus Christ.
  + There is opportunity to speak for justice and morality
  + We are called to promote the kingdom in the manner of Jesus
* Life as followers of Jesus in this world:
  + Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).
  + be advocates of Justice

This is what the Lord says: Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows. Stop murdering the innocent! (Jeremiah 22:3, NLT)

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

* Jesus’ teaching about the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-15)
* The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples for mission (Acts)
* Two aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit
  + You receive the Holy Spirit when you are baptized into Christ (Acts 2)
  + Be filled with, made whole by and empowered by the Holy Spirit
* NCCN, be filled with the Holy Spirit
  + Don’t settle with neat organization and personal ideas of how NCCN should proceed with new pastor
  + Leaders, be filled with the Holy Spirit
    - Cleansing from self-centeredness and quick-fix
    - Love for one another
    - Love for world and mission
    - Leadership in understanding Bible and Jesus
    - Empowerment for mission and service

FORGIVE THOSE HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU

* Those you perceive as your enemies
* Release tyrannical dominion of the past . . .
  + disappointments
  + perceptions of injustice to you
* … so you can move into the future by the power of the Holy Spirit.
* Note order of this:
  + empowered by the Holy Spirit release the past and move ahead
  + False Theory: let go of the past so you can receive the Holy Spirit

Jesus comes to you today.

Some of you identify with disciples in storm in the midst of the ocean.

Some of you identify with disciples hiding in fear of the opponents who crucified Jesus.

Peace be with you

Video: Resurrection of Jesus

Song: Because We Believe (Apostles Creed)