How Deep My Boast Memory Verse: Jeremiah 9:24

March 31st, 2024 Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthains 15:50-57

**SLIDE**

 Happy Easter! He is risen! (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah! I am going to say that a lot this morning, so I hope you are all ready to keep up the response. We come into this glorious Easter morning from the parking lot where the sun is shining, and birds are singing. It’s a beautiful, bright day. But let me remind you how your day began. It actually began in darkness. At one point, you were deeply asleep, unaware of your surroundings. For some of us it might even be said that we were dead asleep. Then the alarm sounded or the sunlight streamed through the window or a child jumped onto your unsuspecting stomach and your eyes opened. You went from being asleep to being awake. From darkness to light. Hallelujah! But in the dark; that’s where Easter morning began for each of us and that is where Easter began for Jesus as well – in the darkness.

**SLIDE 2: Easter Morning Begins in Darkness**

 Last week we talked about the depth of the grave. That fact that Jesus Christ was truly dead and truly buried. This past Friday we tried to encapsulate in a one-hour service the turmoil and torture Jesus endured on our behalf, the humiliation and disgrace of the cross. We sing in our theme song: It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life, I know that it is finished.

**SLIDE 3: Lyrics**

 We talked through how God the Father turned away from his only Son, how Jesus became for us sin. He became cursed, separated from God. He bore the wrath that should have fallen on us. Jesus died and was buried in the grave. All was dark. It was finished. The work that he was sent to accomplish was finished and, in that moment, his life was finished.

 But thankfully, the story was not finished. We read Luke’s account: chapter 24:1-12 READ.

**SLIDE 3: LUKE 24:1-12**

 The women show up at the tomb ready to anoint the body of Jesus with some prepared spices, but when they arrive, they find no body, but instead some messengers from the Lord who tell them “He isn’t here, he has been raised.” We find in this short sentence a full and complete explanation of this very curious thing the women were witnessing. They observe, he isn’t here, and why isn’t he here, because he has been raised! Anything else? The angels sort of include a little additional note saying, by the way, he said all this was going to happen. And verse eight says, “then they remembered his words.” It was like a lightbulb moment for the women. They went from being dumbfounded to nodding their heads “Ah, yes, I remember those words! I was so confused by them…how could the Messiah be killed and then rise again to life? It did not make any sense…but here we are now standing in front of a gaping tomb with no Messiah inside! So it must be just like he said! The dots are connecting here: He HAS risen!” (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah!

**SLIDE 5: He HAS risen!**

 Church this is the grounding of our faith. Everything rides on these three words: He…has… risen. It is the proclamation we make to one another, to our children and grandchildren, to the world! He has risen! But it is more than a proclamation…it is our boast.

**SLIDE 6: it is our boast.**

 Now boasting is annoying, isn’t it? It’s hard to listen to someone go one and on about their accomplishments especially when there is a sense of false humility mixed in with the boasting. It’s one thing when your team wins the game after a hard-fought victory. In that case, at least it seems like you’ve earned the right to boast and there is a sense of shared victory. A team accomplishment. But boasting in general is usually considered bad form. The imitable Dr. Seuss has a knack for highlighting our unfortunate human tendencies in silly rhyme. One such example is a little story called the Big Brag in which a bear and a rabbit bicker with one another about who is the best.

**SLIDE: Book Cover**

The rabbit brags about how far he can hear with his magnificent ears. Why, he can hear a fly cough on top of a mountain ninety miles away. The bear refuses to be bested and takes a long sniff with his powerful nose. He claims he can smell a rotten hummingbird’s egg over 600 miles away. Disturbed by all the incessant bragging, a wise, old worm pop up from the ground to make his case that he is the best due to his incredible eyesight. To prove it, the worm stares long and hard in one direction and reports: “’I’ve looked across the ocean, and I kept on looking until, I looked ‘round the world, and right back to this hill. And I saw on this hill, since my eyesight’s so keen, the two biggest fools that have ever been seen.’ Then the little old worm gave his head a small jerk, and he dived in his hole and went back to his work.” Unfortunately, I think we’ve all been there. We have all had times where we thought more of ourselves then we should. Times where we thought ourselves better than someone else. And while we may have been foolish in those prideful moments, like the little old worm, we can become wise.

SLIDE: Foolish pride can turn to wisdom by looking at the empty tomb.

The worm sarcastically claimed to see around the world, but all we need to see is what the women see, the empty tomb. And attached to this empty tom b is their boast, “He is risen!” (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah!

 Animated by this surprising news (which should have been no surprise), they run to tell the other disciples. Verse 11, “Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn’t believe.” Church, we stand here over 2,000 years after this event and proclaim, no, in fact, we boast, about the truth of the resurrection. We boast about it because there are good historical reasons to believe that it is true. We boast about it because the lives of the disciples and the early church witness to the fact that it is true. We boast about because the Old Testament scriptures suggest that it is true. But we boast about it because we have faith that it is true. We believe it! Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah!

 But some days, the empty tomb is not right in front of our eyes. Some days Easter morning is more of a distant memory. Some days, we feel left in the darkness. Some days our faith wavers. Hear these words again, spoken about the very men who would establish and carry on the very church you are a part of this very day: The words, “He is risen,” “struck the apostles as nonsense and they didn’t believe.” What I am trying to say is that in our struggle keep the faith, we are in good company. In our struggle to understand what God is up to, we are in good company.

**SLIDE: in our struggle keep the faith, we are in good company.**

Jesus himself said, all we really need is the faith of a little seed. And so in faith, we boast to this world, “He is risen.” (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah! And how is such news regarded…as nonsense by many, and many don’t believe. In fact, they likely take us for fools. But we know that God’s wisdom is foolishness to this world. God’s ways are beyond us and we humans have a hard time computing God’s ways. In verse 12 we read that Peter runs to the tomb, corroborates the women’s story and it says, “he returned home, wondering what had happened.” Peter, how are you wondering? The evidence is before you, the women had clearly explained it all. All the things Jesus talked about had happened. What is there to wonder about? We must remember this is the same Peter who got his name from Jesus. He called him the rock and said “On this rock I will build my church.” But here this rock of faith is scratching his head, wondering, how could Jesus’ tomb be empty?

 In our theme song, we sing, “I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.”

SLIDE: “I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.”

He is risen! But sometimes that boast gets crowded out by all the other shouting going on in this world. It seems like everyone is busy pushing agendas and campaigning for candidates and selling themselves and touting their brand…Everyone’s got a boast and often we are the only one boasting in Christ. And if you boast in Christ, you will get sideways looks. You will be considered a fool. You will not receive applause or admiration. And so after a while, maybe you boast in Christ a little more quietly.

**SLIDE: Our boast in Christ can become quiet.**

Maybe you just sort of keep it to yourself. Or maybe, like Peter, you wonder what happened on Easter morning. Let me remind you church, and let us remind each other: He is risen! (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah!

 “I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.” Just as last week, I belabored the point that Jesus was really dead. He did not swoon or go unconscious; he died and was buried. So we make the point here, that Jesus did not just rise from the dead, he was resurrected. In the gospels we read accounts of Jesus raising people from the dead. Most notably, Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the grave. But we need to note, what Lazarus experienced was a resuscitation. Yes, he was dead and yes, he lived again, but Lazarus eventually came to die again. Jesus however was resurrected. He will never die again. He physically sits now at the right hand of God the Father forevermore. And when he returns, Lazarus will finally know of this resurrection as well. We all will. We will be raised just as Jesus was, into eternal life, never to die again. And so we add to our boast: “He is risen! Death, where is your sting?” This now becomes the new thing we are wondering about.

**SLIDE: “The LORD proclaims: the learned should not boast of their knowledge, nor warriors boast of their might, nor the rich boast of their wealth. No, those who boast should boast in this: that they understand and know me. I am the LORD who acts with kindness, justice and righteousness in the world, I delight in these things, declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 9:24**

Jeremiah 9 speaks of God’s judgment against his unfaithful people, but in the harshness of this message we read this: “The LORD proclaims: the learned should not boast of their knowledge, nor warriors boast of their might, nor the rich boast of their wealth. No, those who boast should boast in this: that they understand and know me. I am the LORD who acts with kindness, justice and righteousness in the world, I delight in these things, declares the LORD.”

So fellow believers, fellow Christians, boast away! Boast that we can understand and know God! Boast that our God has made himself known in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Boast that our Savior has achieved for us eternal life! Boast that, in Christ, we have victory over the grave. Boast like nonsensical fools! Death has lost its sting! He is risen! (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah!

Thomas A’Kempis wrote a book of devotional thoughts back in the early 1400’s. The book is called the *Imitation of Christ* and in it he writes: “Do not boast of riches, if you happen to posses them, nor about the important friends you have; boast rather of God’s friendship – he can give us all we want, and longs to give us something more, himself.”

**SLIDE: QUOTE**

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can know God. In fact, we can have a friendship with God. Because Jesus rose from the dead, those who trust and obey him will also rise in like manner. We too will be resurrected on that last day, given new perfected bodies, eternal bodies, unharmed by the ravages of time. We will experience the fullness of our friendship with God, the ultimate reality of our boast.

In John’s gospel, just outside Lazarus’ tomb, Jesus says to his sister Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

**SLIDE: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”**

And then he asks this woman who is mourning the death of her brother, “Do you believe this?” Peter, standing in the empty tomb on Easter morning, do you believe this? You, here this morning, who can be easily caught in the ebb and flow of this world, do you believe this? You who hear news headlines and see the struggle, do you believe this? You, who just this morning, woke from the darkness to the light of day, do you believe this? Do you believe that Christ is the resurrection and the life?

**SLIDE: Hallelujah!**

Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed) Hallelujah! And as a follower of this Christ, I am here to let the world know how deep my boast! Amen!