

Sunday, March 21, 2021

“That Day”

Prophecies fulfilled, that's the theme we're following during this Lent season. And we have seen an increase in the intensity and the meaning of Christ's fulfillment of the prophecies. We've been looking at the prophet Isaiah in particular; where the Prophet told us or has told us that the Messiah will make the blind to see. In our first week we saw that was absolutely true and while the blind people did see both physically and spiritually, the religious leaders saw only physically. They did not see Jesus spiritually as the fulfillment of the prophecy.

In our second week we focused on making the deaf to hear, the mute to speak; and again, there was more to it than just overcoming this physical element. We saw that it also was a fulfillment of the blessing given to Abraham in Genesis 12, verse 3 that the Messiah would come and that through Him, all people would be blessed as Jesus healed both Jew and Gentile.

In our third week we looked at the lame man who the Lord made to walk; but again, there was more to it. He did it on the Sabbath. He showed that He was Lord of the Sabbath. The point was that if He could do what only God can do, then He should be able to do what only God can do; work on the Sabbath or overcome the physical laws of nature.

Last week we dealt with the poor in spirit. There was none who were poorer in spirit than the leper. And yet again there was more to it than just healing the most invalid of all the individuals there were. Here again we saw Jesus showing that He is Lord over everything as he touched the leper. He was not supposed to do that, because the leper was unclean. He's the Lord. He has power over uncleanness. He has power over leprosy. And He is the Lord who wills. He willed to heal that leper as that leper asked, 'Lord if you will, you can heal me.' And Christ's answer was so simple and yet so beautiful. "I will."

Today we go back to the biblical prophecy or as where you're seeing not just prophecy, it is fact, reality. And it is the boldest of all the claims. In Isaiah 26, verse 19, he reveals—"Your dead shall live, their bodies shall

rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy.” Death, it's a common theme in the Bible. Death it's the ultimate curse. When we go to Genesis 2 verse 17, we hear God invoking that curse; “But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” There is death.

Death is the curse of sin. Romans 6:23, “the wages of sin is death.” Death is very equitable. When we look at Isaiah 25:6-9 we again hear the equity. “ And He will swallow up on this mountain, the covering that is cast over all the peoples; the veil that is spread over all the nations, He will swallow up death forever.” But to whom does death apply? All the peoples and it is spread over who? All the nations. Yet, I can't help but look at that prophecy; He will swallow up death forever and go, ‘wow, now that's a bold prophecy.’

And it is a prophecy that we see fulfilled three times in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The first being our gospel reading this morning; Luke chapter seven. We see that after healing the centurion's servant, Jesus returned to his home base to Capernaum, and then from there He went to the small town of Nane. It was a small town 20 miles Southwest of Capernaum. As He gets there, we read; ‘and His disciples and a great crowd went with Him.’ Jesus was quite popular. He was performing miracles and preaching in a way that no one else preached. He used parables; he spoke in typical layperson language. As they drew near to the gate of the town; “behold.” And that word is so important; it's wow look at this! Right at this moment, God set this in action! Behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother and she was a widow. A considerable crowd from the town was with her. This in the 1st century was tragic. Tragic beyond our concept, because this widow was on the verge of losing everything. With both husband and son gone, she had no claim to the ancestral property or land. And unless someone stepped in on her behalf, it would be swallowed up quickly and taken away from her and she would be left destitute.

And so, we read, and listen very carefully to this. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her. And you know we may hear that and go, ‘oh isn't that sweet? Jesus had compassion on her. I have to say compassion and yet I understand why the translators use compassion

because there is no English word that is the equivalent of what the Greek says there. The Greek word that is used, I will not even try to pronounce; but I'll give you its definition. Literally his gut moved. And when the Lord saw her, His gut moved. You probably know exactly what is being spoken of because you have probably felt it. It is that overwhelming emotion that hits sometimes. It is an emotion that hits at the deepest level. It takes the breath out of you. You go just, "oh!" And that is our Lord. That's our Savior, He really knows. He really feels our pain, our sorrow, our grief; or in this case this woman's' grief and it moves His gut.

And then He says, "Do not weep." And then He begins again showing He is Lord. He touches the bier, the stretcher, it's unclean. Who cares? He is Lord. He can take that which is unclean and make it clean. When He touches it, we oftentimes skip by this, but the bearers stop. Why? Because faith. Obviously, they had heard of Jesus and seeing Him touch it, they stopped their procession. They stopped their job. There is someone more important here. It's the Lord. And Jesus speaks to that corpse and says, "Young man, I say to you," and those are very powerful words. "I the Messiah, I'm speaking to you, arise." And he rose and he began talking, and we read fear; and this is biblical fear; standing in awe. Fear seized them all and they glorified God.

Well, if we go just to the very next chapter Luke chapter eight, we see the second fulfillment already. Jesus returns to Capernaum his hometown, His base of operation, shall we say; and there came a man named Jairus, who was the ruler of the synagogue. And there I have to say, whoa, timeout! This is the ruler of the synagogue. He's one of the religious leaders. Remember, Jesus is always butting heads with the religious leaders? It's not a good relationship between them. And yet falling at Jesus's feet, this synagogue ruler falls at Jesus's feet. It is a sign of humility. It is saying, 'I do not deserve to be here. I am the inferior, You are the superior.' And yet it is another profound example of faith. What does he do? He implored Jesus to come to his house for, I quote, "he had an only daughter about 12 years of age, and she was dying." Then what do we read, I quote, "Jesus went." Ok, let's go. He went, and on the way we have that situation where there's this Syrophoenician woman who realizes she is not a Jew. She doesn't deserve anything, she's a sinner, but she has this hemorrhage, a bleeding

disorder. She touches Jesus' garment. He senses power has gone out from Him. He confronts her, says to her, this is that whole thing of you know is it right for the dogs to take the food from the master's table? She says even the dogs get the crumbs Lord. And Jesus tells her daughter, your faith has made you well. Daughter your faith has made you well, go in peace.

And it is at that moment that someone comes running from Jairus's house and says, 'your daughter is dead.' Again, listen carefully, 'Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher anymore.' A profound statement, as a ruler in the synagogue Jairus was a teacher, but what do his friends say about Jesus? He's the teacher. And Jesus hearing this, turns to Jairus and says, 'Do not fear, only believe and she will be well.' Here we have that faith mode coming through again. And as He enters the house; you know what happens. There's the professional mourners there. They had tested everything. She's dead, dead, dead. Jesus says stop the morning, stop commotion. She's not dead. She's just sleeping. They laughed at Him! But He went to her and said, "Young child arise," And she did. And the morning stopped.

Which leads us to the third one, the raising of Lazarus. And yet at the very beginning of this account I think a door is open for us, a book is open to us to better understand the first two fulfillments. Because when Jesus is told that Lazarus is sick and at the point of dying, He waited. He waited until Lazarus died. He waited until the 4th day. Why? Because according to rabbinical teachings, a person was not truly dead until the 4th day. For the first three days, it was taught that their soul hovered around the body, trying to get back in, but that after three days it left because it realized it could not get in. So, Jesus waited until rabbinical teaching said he was dead. Why would he do that? I think it's very obvious. The religious leaders had taken the first two examples and said they were just freshly dead, they weren't really dead, dead. Their spirit just came back into them. It's no big deal. This miracle worker, it is not the fulfillment prophecy. The spirit just came back! And could you not hear someone saying something like that today? The skeptic. But Jesus waits until the 4th day and that's when He comes and He's met by Martha. As they go through this whole exchange and Jesus finally says to her, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in

me, though he dies, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” And if you've been to a funeral before, I've used this text, you know exactly where I'm going with it; because that's not the end of the quote. Jesus kept right on going with the question, “do you believe this?” And again, we now come to that component of faith where Martha responds and says, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the son of God who is coming into this world.” And that is where I now have to step away from the Gospels and ask you. Do you? Do you believe like Martha, like Jairus, like the bearers of the young man of Nane? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God who is coming to the world? And that He is the resurrection and the life?

Or are you like those who we read about immediately after the resurrection of Lazarus? The religious leaders who said, and I quote: “If we let Him go on like this everyone will believe in Him and the Romans will come and take away (and now listen, listen, listen, listen, please!) take away our place and nation.” Who gave them their place? Who gave them their nation? It's the Lord! They were supposed to be the servants of the Lord, and they had turned it into their right. This is our place, we deserve this. And this is our nation that we are ruling over. They removed God from the equation and replaced God with themselves, their logic, and their rules.

And we see then what we heard about this past week in our Lenten service. We see envy. They wanted what Jesus had, and as a result they wanted to stop Him. That's when Caiaphas says, “this Jesus must die.” And so, we read; ‘so from that day on, they made plans to put Him to death.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today is that day where you stand at a corner. You can be like Martha, like Jairus, like his servants, like the bearers of that young man of Nane, and you can say, ‘He is the Christ! He has swallowed up death. He did it on a mountain just like Isaiah said.’ Or you can join Caiaphas and say, ‘you know maybe he didn't really raise all those people; and you know I like my position right now. I don't want to ruffle any feathers. I don't want to upset my family or my neighbors. Maybe I'll just tone it down a little bit and I don't know I'm not proclaim so much.’

When we look at what Isaiah says, what the Lord says through Isaiah. He tells those who are in the dust, who are buried, 'Awake, sing for joy!' We have that promise right here, right now; that death has no power over us. It has been swallowed up by Jesus. Are we going to react with joy or just walk home, drive home and act like nothing really happened?

Today is that day, a crossroad. Which way will you go? It is my prayer that you follow Christ. Amen