

Luke 24:13-35

I'm not complaining that Osama Bin Laden was killed last Sunday, but wouldn't it have been a fitting Mother's Day gift if they had waited until today? Think of all the mothers of those who were killed on September 11, 2001, and the mothers of those soldiers who have been killed in the war on terror since that day. Bin Laden's death will not wipe away their tears; only Jesus' resurrection can do that. But at least now there is some closure for them.

Now that Bin Laden is dead, do you think his followers will give up the fight, pack their things, and go home? If only they would. But sadly, Al Qaeda is surely more resolved now than ever to wage their war of terror, because they fight and live not for the man, Bin Laden, but for their warped and perverted ideals and principles. Compare this with the followers of Jesus. Two of His followers were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were sad and dejected. It was Easter evening. They had not been to the open tomb, but they had lived through the death of their Leader and Master. And these two men, believing Jesus was dead, had given up the fight. They had packed up their things and they were heading home.

Now before we jump all over them, consider this...that they were absolutely correct--not in believing Jesus was dead, but in being sad and defeated with nothing to live for. Say what you want about these two men who refused to believe the Easter report of the women, but they accurately portray the actions and attitude of the followers of Jesus who have no one, anymore, to follow. Without Bin Laden, his followers will do just fine. But without Christ, there is no Christian Faith, no Baptism, no Holy Communion, no forgiveness, no hope of eternal life. Christians do not follow a religion, an ideal, a way of life, or even a book. We follow Jesus. And if Jesus is dead, then like those two men from Emmaus, we should give up the fight, call it quits, and head for home. And some of us already have. And all of us are tempted to.

How would you live if you, like those two men, thought Jesus was dead? Would you come to church, and to Holy Communion? Would you give an offering? Would you study your Bible? Would you strive to please God with your life? Of course not. What would be the point? Sunday morning you would use for yourself to do whatever you wanted. Your money, all of it, you would use on yourself. All your time also, for yourself. Because when your time here is over, that would be it. No Christian burial, no resurrection, no heaven. Without a living Jesus, we may as well live to the fullest now, because after this life comes the Judgment, and we would have no Savior to cling to, no one to plead for us before the Righteous Judge.

I'm not sure what those two men from Emmaus were going to do once they arrived at their homes, but I do know they were not going to throw a party. They were not going to sing "Alleluia's." And they were not going to live, anymore, for Jesus. Not if He was dead. So let me ask you, Is Jesus dead, or is He alive? With our words we are quick to say, "He is risen!" But what do our actions say? What does our attitude say? What do our offerings say? What does our time in the Bible say? And what does our activity on Sunday morning say? We may have more in common with these two men from Emmaus than we realize. Anyone watching them could tell that Jesus was dead. Is that also what they think by watching us?

Now Part Two of the story is a radical change from Part One. After realizing that Jesus was alive, that He was right there with them teaching them and breaking the bread with them, these two raced back to Jerusalem and they were not the same men. Their actions were different from before. Their attitude was different. Now they had joy. Now they had a reason to live; their life had meaning and

purpose. Anyone watching them run back to Jerusalem, who had also seen them earlier that day, would have been baffled. "What great thing happened to you?" they might have asked. Two words would have been a sufficient answer. "Jesus lives! That's what happened to us." That's it. That's why their night turned to day. That's why their gloom turned to joy. That's why everything in their life now was bright and positive--because He who had died now lives.

If you have been living as if Jesus was more dead than alive, then look carefully at these two men. God put this story in our Bible for our benefit. If we see our self in them; if we have been stuck in life living in Part One of the story, isn't it time for us to move on to Part Two? If we do not see Jesus in our Baptism, in Holy Absolution, in Holy Communion, in the teaching that goes on from this pulpit and in Bible Studies, then we are stuck in Part One of the story...because in Part One these two men did not recognize Jesus either.

Friends, Jesus lives! He who died for you now lives for you. He lives in your Baptism. He lives within the Breaking of the Bread. He lives within the preaching and teaching of His words. He lives within the words of forgiveness. Jesus lives in these holy things for you, and because He lives, you are not defeated. No matter how badly life is going for you, Jesus' resurrection changes everything. Because He lives you are forgiven. All your sins He took to the cross, but when he burst out of the tomb, your sins could not. They remain buried, never to haunt you or accuse you again. God forgives you completely for your Savior lives.

Because Jesus lives you have the certain hope of eternal life. In Christ you will be laid to rest one day. With Christ you will be, until through Christ your body will be raised in glory on the Last Day. Because Jesus lives you do not give up the fight...not ever--the fight against your Old Adam, against Satan's temptations, against an unbelieving world. And because Jesus lives, He fights for you, and with you. He is on your side. And His victory is sure and certain because He already defeated all your enemies in His death and resurrection.

Friend, do not live in Part One of the story. Part One is a defeatist attitude. Part One is sadness, an angry temper, a selfish way of life. Part One is no reason to attend church. No reason to live with purpose and hope. But you are in Part Two of the story because Jesus rose from the dead, and He did it for you. If anyone should feel defeated and full of despair, it's the followers of Osama Bin Laden. But not us. Jesus lives! The victory's won, Alleluia! Amen.