

“PRAY FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST”

Easter, April 12, 2009

Sermon Given by Rev. Corinne Hodges, SJOC

- I. I know a man who has had a hard year
 - A. One illness to another
 - 1. Gone through surgeries, lost his appetite and weight
 - 2. Endless tests, dealt with changes in his body
 - B. Lost confidence, doubts crept in
 - 1. Deal with changes in his way of thinking and spirit
 - C. Amidst all the suffering he has endured, at prayer time, grabbed for my hands and with tears in his eyes: “Pray for the Resurrection of Christ”

- II. Last year at about this time, someone I know was killed.
 - A. Sandy: Homecoming queen in HS, Nat. Merit Scholar, after college became successful bus. woman—smart, beautiful, inner spirit, energy
 - B. Hard times:
 - 1. Former boyfriend could not take the ending of relationship
 - 2. Stalked her, broke restraining orders
 - 3. As she left her workplace, the man took her life and then his as well
 - 4. Amidst all this sadness, anger and fear, I remember the words: “Pray for the Resurrection of Christ”

- III. I know older gentleman who before he goes to sleep prays to God that this night shall be his last:
 - A. He has lived a long life, but not an easy one
 - 1. Tired
 - 2. Done the work he believes he was called to do
 - 3. Says he is ready to die
 - 4. Yet each morning he awakes and tries to see the extra days through eyes of gratitude
 - 5. And when the day is over, he lies back down to sleep praying again, “Lord, please take me this night. May this night be my last.”

- IV. I share these stories with you today not to sadden or dim your Easter, but to offer them as evidence:
 - A. **My friends, we are in great need of a Savior**
 - B. **The glorious news this Easter is that we have one in Jesus Christ**
 - C. **Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

- V. Several years ago, horseriding trip in Canada. Guide in early twenties, two crucifixes: “He is risen!”
- A. Cross with body of Christ—times I’ve needed that
 - 1. Remind me of my own sins—things I do that put Christ there, when I am not kind, unfair, say things or do things that hurt others. Jesus on the cross makes me to be a better person.
 - 2. Reminds me of what Christ did for me. The great sacrifice he paid for all of us. Humbles me, grateful.
 - B. Clean, stark, simple cross—no body
 - 1. Cross we celebrate today—cross that gives us hope
 - 2. Christ has been raised from the dead and liberated
 - 3. And through Christ, so have we.
 - 4. No stone, no injustice, no evil could keep him in the grave. No boulder, no unfairness, no hardship can keep us down or rob us of the joy of eternal life.
 - 5. When we believe in this cross, we are transformed from fearful, discouraged men, women and children into hopeful, loving, faith-filled people. We gather the strength to continue on
- VI. This Easter Sunday, we make this transition...move step out from the darkness of death and the tomb to the brightness of a new day
- A. Many of us are saying, “It’s about time.”
 - B. We need the promise of new life that God offers us
 - C. For in this world of earthly things, it is the one real source of encouragement, the only lasting and true thing, we can count on
- VII. Yes, we need to continue to pray for resurrection
- A. There will come a time when there will be an end to all illness, pain, death and sorrow. We will be restored to fullness of life. The man who is sick will be made whole. People like my friend who lived lives of fear, will be set free. And one night, the man who prays to pass will be granted his wish.
 - B. But Easter is the time when we Christians do more than just pray for the Resurrection; we say we believe in it. And while we may not understand it fully, our lives should shine forth our joy in this inheritance.
 - C. So on this Easter Day, let us celebrate our new life with Christ with great gratitude. Hear the birds, see the flowers, feel the Holy Spirit at work in new birth all around you. Keep the faith and maintain the hope. It is a new day. Hallelujah! Amen!