

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 4.4.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for Easter Sunday, April 4, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Isaiah 25:6-9 The promise of death's demise and abounding joy

⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸He will swallow up death forever; and the

Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. ⁹It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO ISAIAH, CHAPTER 25

1. The mountain that is referred to in vss. 6 and 7 is Zion, a term that is used to describe the rise on which Jerusalem is built, Jerusalem itself, and God's people. When do you think these astonishing promises (vss. 6-9) will be fulfilled?
2. How far reaching is the curse of death that began in the Garden of Eden (vs. 7)?
3. What is "the reproach of his people" in vs. 8?
4. What's the significance of the word "waited" that appears twice in verse 9?
5. From what are we saved (vs. 9)?
6. Sometimes we call Holy Communion a 'foretaste of the feast to come.' How does that apply to these verses?

2ND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Spreading the story of the God who saves us

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time,

most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO I CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 15:

1. Here Paul describes the transmission of the Gospel as being not unlike a relay race in which a baton is passed from one runner to another. First, he received the good news, then he passed it on to others. From whom have you received the Gospel? To whom are you called to pass it on?
2. Look up Romans 10:17. How does this relate to vs. 11 above?
3. Why does Paul describe himself (vs. 8) as “one untimely born”? What makes him odd?
4. In vs. 3 and 4, what does the phrase “in accordance with the Scriptures” mean?
5. I Corinthians, chapter 15 has been called “the Great Resurrection Chapter.”

Take 10 minutes and read through the whole chapter as an Easter gift to yourself.

THE GOSPEL: Mark 16:1-8 The alarming and astonishing good news of Easter

¹When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, **when the sun had risen**, they went to the tomb. ³And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” ⁴And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back — it was very large. ⁵And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and

they were alarmed. ⁶And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. **He has risen**; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, **tell his disciples and Peter** that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” ⁸And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO MARK, CHAPTER 16:

1. (Vss. 1-2) Why did the women go to the tomb? What were they expecting to find? Do you think they were hoping that Jesus had been raised?
2. Who is this white-robed “young man” in the tomb? (See also Mark 14:51-52.)
3. According to this story, who were the first evangelists, that is, the first ones to hear the good news that Jesus was risen, and then pass it on to others?
4. It is thought that verse 8 is the original ending of Mark’s Gospel. Does the reaction of the women (to the message of the young man) seem genuine and believable?
5. What strikes you as odd about this abrupt and joyless ending to Mark’s Jesus story?
6. It says “they said nothing to anyone” (in the Greek it’s actually a double negative, to make special emphasis, literally “they said nothing to no one”). Do you think they did eventually did tell anyone?
7. Do you think there is any point to Christianity or to living if Jesus did not rise?