

LAMPLIGHTER

MARCH 2008

THEME: JESUS SAID...

“Do You Believe This?”

JOHN 20:30, 31

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25,26

Dear Friends of the Risen Savior,

Recently, many of us were shocked to hear the news story of the shootings on the campus of the University of Northern Illinois. At the time of this writing six are reported dead and several others wounded. Locally, in the Sioux City vicinity, three young teenagers were killed in an automobile accident. There was no alcohol involved. There was no foul play. So in each of these cases, there is a feeling of senselessness which causes us to ask many questions. What is happening on our campuses today? What value do we place on human life? What is the basis of my hope in such tragedies? When we lose someone who is near and dear to our hearts, where can we go for comfort?

Fortunately we do not have to muddle through these times by ourselves or wander in the state of hopelessness. Consoling Martha and Mary at the death of Lazarus, Jesus speaks the words of our text: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25,26) In these words Jesus was saying more than that He gives resurrection and life. In some way these are identified with Him, and His nature is such that final death is impossible for Him. We learn from this that Jesus not only gives life, but that Jesus is life. Look at the following passages: (John 14:6 NIV) “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”; (Acts 3:15 NIV) “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this”; (Heb 7:16 NIV) “One who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.”

As we look forward to our Easter celebration later this month, we remember with great joy and enthusiasm that Jesus rose victoriously over death and the grave. The other point being made is that Jesus is not only life, but He conveys life to the believer so that death will never triumph over Him. These solemn words, “I am the resurrection and the life...,” are used most appropriately in the burial service, not only referring to the raising of Lazarus to a natural life, but indicating that Christ is also the author of the resurrection to eternal life. Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead. His resurrection was a pledge of the resurrection of all believers. In this promise of our resurrection from the dead, death loses its power over us as in the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15:54-57 states, “When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ {55} ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ {56} The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. {57} But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Or in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. {14} We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”

Do you believe this? The author of life bestows not just the promise of life, but gives life to His people! In our baptism, God has made us partakers of His victorious life in Christ. Paul says in Romans 6, “Count yourselves, therefore, dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Those who depart in the faith live. Death does not break the living union between the soul and our Redeemer, for nothing in all creation is able to separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord! Believe this – LIFE REIGNS!

Close with prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #32 “I Know that My Redeemer Lives.”