

## Scripture Readings:

**Isaiah 42:1** “1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”

**5** Thus says God, Jehovah, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: **6** "I, Jehovah, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, **7** To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. **8** I am Jehovah, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.”

**Isaiah 44:13** “The craftsman stretches out his rule, He marks one out with chalk; He fashions it with a plane, He marks it out with the compass, And makes it like the figure of a man, According to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. **14** He cuts down cedars for himself, And takes the cypress and the oak; He secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. **15** Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. **16** He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire." **17** And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"”

# ***"Kingdom Power in the Resurrection"***

**This morning we gather with the candles lit to celebrate the victory of the resurrection!**

**Holy Week this year brought a new tirade from Osama Bin Laden attacking the Pope and some Danish cartoonists... It was a good reminder to compare the folly of the world with God's power, as the Prophet Isaiah did in our morning reading. The rage engendered by these cartoons is instructive, but not funny to the cartoonist in hiding! We might have expected a similar reaction from the craftsman that Isaiah described if someone made fun of his idol, or those silversmiths who fashioned idols of Dianah!**

**We proclaim on Resurrection Sunday the power and authority of Jesus and it stands in stark contrast with what the rest of the world has to offer: Let's take a quick inventory...**

**Osama is outraged at people making fun of his prophet promising a "severe" reaction. The problem they have is that their Prophet Muhammad is dead and buried, unable to defend himself: There is no demonstration of resurrection power in Islam.**

**Much of the eastern world has followed the earlier holy men Confucius and Buddha. Again the problem is that they are dead and buried... Confucius for all the "wisdom" he shared with others, was burdened late in life with the loss of both his sons and his favorite disciples and died at the age of 72.**

**Now Buddha tries to solve the problem by teaching that all that we are and do is an illusion and that we must strive to reach "Nirvana" where there is nothing material or individual. Buddha's final words as he died at the age of 80 were "All composite things pass away, strive for your own liberation with diligence."**

⇒ **If the truth of God were not written on the hearts of men, the suicide rate would be MUCH higher in the nations under Buddhism's sway.**

**And just to remind us that there is nothing new under the sun, just as we saw with that man worshipping the other half of his fire wood, they have one of Buddha's teeth as a relic in Sri Lanka to this very day.**

**Those who still follow the Jewish faith have missed their day of visitation as we studied last week and that leaves us with the Greeks and Romans: The humanists which we still have among us today. Whether it is the Roman Caesar declaring he is God or the Humanist Manifesto saying man is the beginning and end of all wisdom, they still have the same problem: They are ALL dead or dying...**

**They are all in the end like that man the Prophet Isaiah described who takes a tree that HE grew, uses half to warm himself as it is burned and carves the other half, with his own skill into an idol to which he then bows and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"**

➤ **SO, on Resurrection Sunday we contrast all of this with the Kingdom of Christ established by the power of His resurrection!**

**I Corinthians 15 "I Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.**

➤ **Paul says we have Good News, Good News that is presented and believed in faith!**

**3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.**

- **Despite all the protests from our modern skeptics, the Bible does say that man is made in the image of God and IS a rational being**
- **Here Paul presents the “evidence”, overwhelming evidence, for the resurrection of Jesus Christ! -- *mention unbelief of the religious leaders***
- **Here we are reminded that we are to give honest answers to honest questions!**
- **Paul then looks to his witness**

**8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.**

- **Paul gives us a beautiful reminder that we are ALL saved by God’s gift of grace: *Nothing in my hand I bring...***

**12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.**

- **Paul is here asking whether we REALLY believe what the Bible says: Have we been led astray or been filled with doubts? The result of such drifting would be very serious...**

**14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”**

- **On the one hand we MUST believe that this is true! If this book lies, we are truly fools**
- **On the other hand, it is sad that even faithful professing Christians act as if it is not, by not REALLY putting their hope in Christ!**

**20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.**

- **Here Paul is summarizing what Luke has presented in his orderly account: Jesus has come to save His people from their sins, these forgiven sinners are made part of His Body, the Church and then Paul turns to the power of the Kingdom that will fill the whole earth: Resurrection Power!**

**25 For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.**

- **Here is a very brief summary of Church history: We have been given the Great Commission and Jesus is not coming back until it is completed!**
- **This is serious business and we should be serious disciples who want to serve our victorious Savior!**
- **Paul now shows that this battle against death is a serious battle and it rages from Genesis to Revelation:**

**29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? 30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"**

- **The bottom line is that all religious activities are just "show" if we don't perform them in the context of the real battle.**
- **The Mormons have created an entire cult out of these verses by yanking them out of the proper context of all the Old Testament washings that showed the serious problem of death!**
- **Paul says that IF the end game, the defeat of death, is not real then all of his work has been in vain, as is ours, so we might as well join the world and eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die...**

**Like ALL those other great leaders that the world follows**

- **Paul then gives the Corinthians & anyone else who chooses to seek wisdom or company from the wrong folks a very serious warning...**

**33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." 34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame."**

- **Many lessons for us here for today:**
  - ⇒ **You cannot join those who doubt the authority of the Bible and then maintain your "good habit" of reading the Scriptures**
  - ⇒ **You cannot join with those who say the evidences of so-called science have given us so new insights and then say you still have the habit of seeking the knowledge of God**
  - ⇒ **You cannot join with those who engage in sinful attitudes and actions and then say you are "awake to righteousness."**

**This is a place to reflect on Psalm 1 or the wisdom of Proverbs – You CANNOT travel in the way of righteousness AND be on the path of the wicked at the same time!**

- **Paul also warns us against spending all of our time "thinking" about our salvation rather than doing the work of the Kingdom!**
- **But with his gentle rebuke comes some honest discussion... We are to have a proper balance in our Christian walk**

35 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"  
36 You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he pleases, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. 40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

- ⇒ Paul gives this as background to answer the question they and we all want to ask: What will it be like when we are resurrected?

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

- These are matters we can ponder, but we must not dwell on them and realize that the full understanding is beyond our reach this side of Christ's Second Coming  
*[we struggle to understand much of what we see here, as God showed Job!]*
- BUT it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ that Paul finally turns to in giving comfort & encouragement to these troubled Saints.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- How should we respond to how Paul has instructed us with on this glorious Easter morning?
- He concludes with a very practical conclusion, one that we can strive to obey for the entirety of our Christians walk...

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

- We truly serve the risen and reigning Savior...
- Let us go forth steadfast in the faith!
- Let us go forth immovable from the path of righteousness
- And let us go forth always abounding in the work of the Lord
- Knowing that we were created IN Christ Jesus unto good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them!