

HARRINGAY UNITED CHURCH-BAPTIST
EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 08, 2012.

TOPIC: I HAVE SEEN THE LORD
TEXT: JOHN 20:1-18

Introduction:

Easter time is a time of mixed feelings. The time starts with excitement, praise and blessing the One who comes in the name of the Lord on Palm Sunday. Then proceeds to false allegations, conviction and sentencing to death on the Cross on Friday. And today, it ends with the most powerful miracle of Jesus' resurrection from the dead which nobody but the ones who crucified Him remembered. The Passion Week started with high on Palm Sunday, slumped down to the depth of Friday and rose high again on Resurrection Sunday

The Narratives:

The women that were the last to leave the tomb of Jesus on Friday evening (the night of preparation for the Sabbath) were the first to arrive on Sunday morning (the first day of the week or the Lord's Day). They must be very eager to do the final rites properly for the Lord. This shows their commitment, love and devotion to their and Lord and Master, Jesus.

According to John, it was Mary of Magdala from whom Jesus has cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2) was first to get to the tomb.

On getting there, she found that the stone which was rolled to shut, secure and sealed the tomb has been removed. She concluded that her master's body had been taken away. She ran to tell the disciples. Peter and John ran to the tomb to verify her claim and when they got there, they found that Jesus had been raised from the dead and went back to the place they were staying. Even at this time they did not still understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead (John 20:9).

Mary stayed at the tomb; she wanted to know what really had happened to Jesus' body. She persisted in her quest and she bent over to look at the tomb as if Jesus body was tiny like a needle. Mary must have been puzzled because she never expected that Jesus' body would be missing, too big to be missing, hence she was looking for Him as it he was so tiny as pin.

I remember when I went to but petrol at Sainsbury and checked something with N & N signs but forgot my car at Home Base car park. I came back to the office believing I have parked my car in front of the office. When I got back to the office, the car was not there and I was looking as it my car was so tiny that I had to be looking at every nook and corner for it. It could so miserable at those moments when you are looking for what you know and believe that cannot be taken away or stolen and suddenly you are looking for it.

While still waiting, Jesus appeared to Mary but she did not recognise Him thinking He was the Gardner and pleaded to tell her where he had laid Jesus. Jesus then called her, 'Mary' then she recognised Him and she cried 'Rabboni' meaning 'Teacher'.

Could it be that only when Jesus spoke that she recognised his voice or she was deliberately blinded from recognising him until such a time He was willing?

Jesus response to he not to hold on to Him was not the physical touch, but I believe that He was telling her I will not be around for long, so do not hold on to me rather, I will send you another counsellor who will be with you and that is the Holy Spirit. The reason is that He is going back to His and her father and His God and her God. The good Shepherd knows his sheep and they recognise his voice.

Mary then went back to the disciples and told them the good News that she had seen the Lord.

The relevance of Resurrection/Easter

Resurrection is made real in Christian lives as it manifest the three stages from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

As on Palm Sunday:

Lives could sometime be like honey-moon attractive to people who will praise, acknowledge, love and be attracted to you, the people outside your area who are distant from you; or our close relations and followers who have acknowledged the call of God in or lives and are supporting you accomplish the vision. And also, it will attract hostility, envy, Jealousy and plans to get rid of us like the religious leaders, but when we focus on our mission and calling we will accomplish our purpose.

As on Good Friday:

The course of pursuing our faith and our believe in Jesus Christ will not be straight forward and will never be on a plateau. It will swing up and down. Our lives may be like a roller coaster characterised by intense hatred, persecution and sometimes death or extermination without genuine reason. By the time you know it; they have gotten rid of you. They think by doing that that will be the end of your life.

But the perpetrators just like their father (the Devil) have forgotten that God has the last card, the resurrection card.

Many Christians are been killed in China, Nigeria and other parts of the world thinking that their action will be the end of Christianity. I am afraid this will be getting worse because Jesus said in John 16:2 "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God." NIV

All what I encourage you to do is to stay focus as Jesus did and now Mary by the tomb. It may be Good Friday when everything looks gloomy, dark and hopeless, God has the last card to play and it is always full of surprise, life from death, hope from hopelessness, beauty from ashes and abundance from poverty, the resurrection day.

And when this happens, the enemies will bite their fingers just like Satan did because he thought death was Jesus' end but not knowing that God has the resurrection last card to play. God has the last say on your life.

As on Easter Sunday:

God did not allow Jesus' body to decay in the tomb; He raised Him up on Sunday morning, the third day He had died because He has promised that and because Christ has pleased Him.

Now Jesus has redeemed us and reconciled us back to God through the shedding of his blood. As God did not allow Satan to prevail against Jesus, so God will never allow our enemies to prevail, no matter how intense the hatred, persecution and torture might be. He will always see to it that our soul is preserved.

Even many times when the enemies think they have won and are jubilating, God will draw His last card of surprise by raising you up from your dead situation.

The only thing we need to do is to wait like Mary waited at the tomb, persistent in searching for her Saviour, Jesus showed up for her. Jesus will show up for you too.

And when Jesus showed up in your life in any way, anytime and anywhere, you must like Mary tell others, 'I have seen the Lord'.

Conclusion:

As Christians, we cannot and will not escape these types of experiences because they are part of the package of following Christ.

Jesus warned us in John 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."

Therefore, no matter what your situation is, no matter what you have been undergoing, honeymoon that turns to be nasty and series of unexpected accusations and torture to the extent that you think the end is near, remember that God your father who raised Jesus up from the dead has the last card of your life and has the last say on your matter.

Cheer up my friend, today is resurrection day and God will raise all your dead situations the enemies have been responsible.

Say 'Celebrate, Jesus is alive.'

HAPPY EASTER TO YOU ALL