

St. Brendon's

22nd Sunday After Pentecost – November 6, 2022

Fr. Rob Goebel

Main Text: Luke 20:27-38

Let's Pray.

Heavenly Father, you gave your apostles grace truly to believe and to preach your word: Grant that we might love what they believed and preach what they taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Imagine with me for a minute a dark planet. Cold and forbidding. A place where everyone does what is best for them and no one trusts each other. On this planet, everyone fights to amass power and wealth before they eventually meet their end. The history of this planet is filled with countless stories of war and strife, natural disasters, tragedies, and evil. There is no afterlife, and those who have died simply return to the ground to become the nutrients of the next generation. They have no God, and life is misery, and one day you die.

That's bleak, isn't it? That is not the kind of place where I want to live. And I'm sure you would agree. But here's the thing, This would be our world without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Think about it for a minute. If Jesus had been born, lived, and died, and that had been the end of the story, you and I would have no hope for our resurrection to new life in Christ. This life would be the end all, and the highest virtue would be to gain wealth and power and get all you could before you die. We would live as we pleased, always seeking our highest pleasure. The value of others would depend solely on what they could do for us. If this were the case, God would, at best, be reduced to a powerless and, at worst, like a cosmic bully with a magnifying glass using the sun to burn and torture us.

We would have NO HOPE.

When I meet an atheist, I am often shocked that they are ok with this being the answer.

This doesn't sound good; this sounds like hell.

Pope Benedict the 16th said:

“It would be morally reprehensible that the tragedies of history should have the final word.”

But in today's Gospel reading, we find the Sadducees challenging Jesus because they don't believe in the resurrection of the body. A professor of mine in college used to say, “the Sadducees were sad you see, because they didn't believe in the resurrection of the body.”

Even today, there are some who call themselves Christians who don't believe Jesus physically rose from the dead.

This is mind-bulging to me. if Jesus is not raised from the dead, then what hope do you or I have of being raised from the dead to live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven?

If Jesus is not resurrected from the dead, WE HAVE NO HOPE!!!!

All the tragedies, the genocides, and all the strife of history would be left unanswered.

But thanks be to God; this is not our fate! Because:

Christ has died

Christ has risen

and Christ will come again.

When we live in this resurrection, hope it changes everything. It changes the importance of our possessions. It changes what we live for, and it changes our understanding of death.

The traditional Anglican funeral is so powerful. It places the death of the faithfully departed in a hopeful light right at the start of the liturgy.

As the coffin enters the church with the procession, the priest says these words from today's Old Testament, reading; they're Job's words:

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Death is not the final word. Because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we have hope! That puts our hardships and tragedies into a new light, doesn't it? In the light of the resurrection, we can face hardship and even face death with our hope firmly fixed on Jesus.

I'm reminded of the story of Lizzy Atwater. She was a young American woman who was expecting her first child and had gone to China with her husband to be a missionary right around the turn of the 20th century.

In June of 1900, the Boxer Rebellion broke out in China. The Boxers were a secret society that had existed for several years, as far back as the 17 hundreds or possibly even earlier. They were dedicated to the Chinese culture and way of life and were opposed to anything they believed threatened it. This was a horrific time. 32,000 Chinese Christians and 167 missionaries were killed during this time.

The Rebellion lasted several months, and Lizzie and her husband lived quite sometime during that period, but on August 3rd of, 1900, she wrote a letter home to her family.

Lizzie writes:

"Dear Ones, I long for a sight of your dear faces, but I fear we shall not meet on earth... I am preparing for the end very quietly and calmly. The Lord is wonderfully near, and He will not fail me. I was very restless and excited while there seemed a chance of life, but God has taken away that feeling, and now I just pray for grace to meet the terrible end

bravely. The pain will soon be over, and oh the sweetness of the welcome above!

12 Days after she wrote this letter Lizzie Atwater and several other missionaries were killed.

Faced with certain death, Lizzie says, "The Lord is wonderfully near, and He will not fail me."

This kind of faith is amazing! And awe-inspiring!

How can Lizzie Atwater have this kind of hope?

The kind of faith demonstrated by Lizzie Atwater comes from only one place . . . The sure and certain hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and, by it, her resurrection to new life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is our faith! This is our hope!

We must remember that this world is not the end of all but only the beginning of the rest of our lives in the Kingdom of God.

When we suffer the pains and tragedies of this life, and we will, we must hold on to this great hope.

And we must share the wonderful and Good News of Christ's resurrection with those who are living desperate lives without hope.