

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, May 10, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“The Resurrection Tree”

READING: I Corinthians 15:1-Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Many moons ago my good friend, Erna McIntyre, bought a lilac bush for me. I had told her how much I loved their fragrance and that they always reminded me of home because we had a rather large lilac bush in our yard. So when I was presented with this gift, I immediately planted it in the back yard behind our pool. It blossomed that first spring, and then it promptly died! I don't know why. I took good care of it, but it expired, nonetheless.

So the next season I planted a forsythia bush. I like those almost as much as lilacs, and I had seen many blooming around town so thought it might do better than my lilac did. I planted it where I had pulled out the lilac, and it, too, blossomed once. Then it, too, died. I don't know why. I took good care of it, but it expired, nonetheless.

However, when I went to take out that dead forsythia, I found a sturdy little tree shoot growing merrily right in the center of all that dead forsythia. I was surprised and a little amused that in the same spot where two pampered bushes had given up, this little tree was making a go of it. I was so impressed that I said out loud, “If you can live in that spot, I'll let you have it!” And it did! Turns out that that little shoot was a persimmon tree, a daughter of the big one I have in the back corner of my lot. It has grown straight and strong and tall. I expect this year or next to see it produce its first crop of persimmons.

Becky's not very pleased with the tree. She doesn't like its leaves getting in the pool in the fall. She fears it will drop persimmons in the pool when it finally begins to produce fruit. But I have promised to prune it away from the pool, and so far, so good. I told her that I had made a promise to that tree. In a spot that had brought nothing but death and disappointment, that little tree had brought out life. It's my “Resurrection Tree”.

On Good Friday evening Joseph of Arimathia and Nicodemus had taken a lifeless, empty, and destroyed body off the cross and laid it in a place surrounded by death and disappointment. In a new tomb they put that lifeless corpse and sealed it in with a large stone. All around that tomb were others not so new, full of dead men's bones and decay. In every direction that cemetery was full of loss and sorrow and grief. It was a place of hopelessness.

But early on Sunday morning the most amazing, most important, and most unexpected thing happened: out of all that death – life sprang up! Death and the grave could not hold the sinless Son of God. The tomb, the stone, the watch, the seal – all of them were rendered futile and worthless. Jesus lives! And because he lives, the children of God have hope!

I said that what happened on Sunday was unexpected. It shouldn't have been. St. Paul in our text says that the death and the Resurrection of our Lord were both prophesied in the Scriptures (that is, the Old Testament Scriptures). In addition Jesus had on at least three different occasions told the Apostles that he would be crucified and then be raised again. Yet not one of them was hanging around that tomb at sunrise waiting for Jesus to come out. That cemetery was too creepy in the pre-dawn darkness for those men. Death was too final and too strong for those men. The Scriptures were still too cryptic for those men. The thought that life might come out of a place of death was beyond those men.

Thanks be to God that you and I have their words, their witness, and their firsthand accounts of the risen Savior. Thanks be to God that out of a place of death and the ends of things, he brought forth life and a new beginning of things. My "Resurrection Tree" is doing well. The leaves are just now coming out. That tree found life in a place where only death had been before. Reminds me whenever I think on it how Easter did the same for us!

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) Please keep our CONFIRMANDS in your prayers. This coming Sunday they will have their CONFESSIOAL SUNDAY (May 15) followed by their CONFIRMATION DAY (May 22). Pray that God will bless, equip, and encourage them for these important events in their young lives.
- 2) There's a BUS EXCURSION planned for May 25. We'll leave at 9:00 AM for St. Meinrad Archabbey for a tour, then lunch at the Overlook, and a stop to watch the turtles run at Turtle Run Winery. Your only costs are you lunch and any purchases you make. Sign up outside the office, or call Karen and ask her to do that for you.