

# I Belong

Scripture: Romans 6: 5-8

Romans 8: 31-34

Date: April 12, 2020

## **INTRODUCTION**

### VISION 2020 JOURNEY

In 2020 Maranatha has been on a vision quest – a quest to see God more clearly. A vision question to see ourselves more clearly as well. The journey through Lent was lead by a question from the Heidelberg Catechism – *What is your only comfort in life and in death?* A question that seeks the heart of who we are and how we are to live.

Covid 19 invasion upon our world interrupted the journey together here at Maranatha but the questions from this virus into our everyday lives remained true. Am I forgiven from the pain of my past sins, am I freed to live fully and abundantly now, am I taken care of by God's provision in the kingdom of heaven yet to come and in the kingdom of heaven here and now.

### GOOD FRIDAY

The Romans 6 text speaks of how we were crucified with Christ through the parts of our lives that were the sinful causes of Christ's need for a death to pay the debt of our sins. On Good Friday we looked at the last seven words or phrases of Jesus and sought to see the things we had done or said that were crucified with Christ.

But today's text also speaks of how our old self was crucified but also that if we identify with Christ's death then we can also identify with Christ's resurrection. So on this Easter Sunday – Resurrection Sunday we'll look at those same seven phrases and identify our place in them as well.

## **FORGIVE THEM - LOVE IN BELONGING!**

In Luke 23: 34 Jesus speaks – perhaps to the soldiers, the religious leaders, those gathered with these words of grace - *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*

On Good Friday - we looked at the giving away of our heart to the things of the world and not of God. We looked at the absence of love in our lives - love for God, love for ourselves and love for the world around us.

We know though – on this side of the cross and the resurrection – that God's love paid the price for our sinful rebellion against God taking away our stain filled lives and replacing them with new lives. We understand laundry day where clothes are washed and the grime and filth are cleansed. The image that is used in Revelation 3: 5 and 6: 11 speaks of believers wearing white robes signifying their purity and righteousness because of Christ's actions for them.

But we also know from Psalm 51 where David – in his confession for his heinous sins – asks that God would cleanse him – whiter than snow. A cleansing that is more than just the outside – the outer garments – but every part of who David is.

**IN PARADISE - HOPE IN BELONGING!**

Jesus in Luke 23: 43 is speaking to one of the other criminals being executed at the time. In response to a request to remember the man at the end of time – Jesus answers - *Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise*

On Good Friday we looked at Paradise - heaven - through one of Jesus' metaphors – bread. We looked at how bread was created when a kernel fell from the plant in order to die and create something new.

In the Bible – bread is a sustenance for life. Israel in the desert depended on mana – bread, Jesus in the temptations by Satan was tempted to make bread, Jesus took bread – loaves – to feed the crowds, Jesus taught prayer including a request to give us this day our daily bread and Jesus used bread at the last supper. In John 6 Jesus declared Himself as the bread of life and that those who eat of Him will never die.

There is hope found in the provision from God for us. In the world in which we live now AND in the world yet to come where we will be with God forever.

**DEAR WOMAN HERE IS YOUR SON / SON HERE IS YOUR MOTHER - COMMUNITY OF BELONGING!**

On the cross Jesus looks at his mother – Mary – and the disciple John and speaks to them in John 19: 26-27 - *When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"* <sup>27</sup> *and to the disciple, "Here is your mother."* *From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

On Good Friday we saw how our world is fragile – especially now with Covid 19 social distancing. But the separation of relationships is more than horizontal – it's vertical as well. We are reminded however, that despite the brokenness of the world around us and the brokenness within us that God has not left us alone.

His covenant promises continued through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that not only are we loved despite our sinfulness but also we are reconciled back to the full relationship we were called into as God's people.

Genesis 17: 7 reminds us of God's call to be our God and for us to be His people. Matthew 18:20 reminds us of Jesus' encouragement in Matthew 18:20 that wherever two or three are gathered in His name – He will be there.

A amaryllis bulb that my mother had just planted before she died made its trek across Canada with us and at Christmas time we noted that it was still in a bulb form and hadn't really been watered or taken care of. Yet here on Easter Sunday – after 3 ½ months of some better care - it is flourishing!

### **MY GOD – WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? - FAITH IN BELONGING!**

Yet not all things flourish. In Matthew 27: 46 and in Mark 15: 34 we see Jesus cry out - *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* A moment of emptiness that we noted on Good Friday as the lack of value that we see in our ideals, dreams, perspectives and even in our faith. Anything – everything – could be on sale for the right price.

Yet even though we might forget our value – God does not. Isaiah 49: 5 asks the rhetorical question – could a mother forget her baby with the implied response that neither does God forget you. In Hebrews 13: 5 the writer reminds the readers that God will not leave nor forsake – reject or abandon – you. In 1 John 3: 1 the readers are reminded that they are children of God and heirs to the kingdom even in their adaption into the family of God.

In contrast to the For Sale sign we were reminded of the symbol of a wedding ring. My wedding ring identifies me - not as Rhonda's husband but as one who is tied – in love – to another. It's not the value of the ring but the value of the relationship that the ring represents. The relationship with God is not tied to a ring or a baptismal or profession of faith certificate. It's not tied to church attending or tithing but tied to the power of God who continues to reside within us.

### **I'M THIRSTY - STRENGTH FROM BELONGING!**

Near the end of the time on the cross Jesus succumbs to his earthly needs. Having been arrested the night before, tried and convicted, beaten and flogged and now crucified – he is thirsty and John 19: 28 records the request for drink.

On Good Friday we noted that many of us are poured out and weary and empty in our lives. Long before the toll of Covid 19 in our lives we were running a pace in our lives that was unsustainable.

In John 4 we noted that Jesus came to a well in Samaria tired and weary and thirsty and asked a woman at the well for something to drink. That woman was also at the well, tired and weary and thirsty from the many issues in her life.

Today we note that Jesus – over the course of the discussion – declared that He is the water of life and that those who drink of His truth and grace will never be thirsty again. In John 6 he declares that He is the water of life. In Revelation we noted that there was an image of the river of life flowing and that there was an invitation to drink of it and enjoy the fullness of life.

Today we note that rather than an image of an empty glass upside down – from Good Friday – we see the image of a pitcher filled with juice (which we will use in communion later) as representing the abundant satisfying life offered by Jesus Christ.

### **FATHER INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT - CALLED TO BELONG !**

Jesus in Luke 23: 46 call out - *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.* On Good Friday we noted that many of us are living lives that are confused and chaotic. We don't know where we are trying to go in our lives – much less where we are now! We spoke of needing a roadmap for directions but that we weren't willing to take those directions.

But we are reminded today that God speaks those directions into our lives through His scriptures. Psalm 119: 105 describes how God's word is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path and a guide to our life. John 3: 16 describes God's actions in that God so loved the world that He gave us Jesus and that all who would believe will not perish but have eternal life. Finally 1 John 4: 16 records that *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God and so we know and rely on the love God has for us.*

Thus the bible becomes an invitation to read about God but also an invitation to respond to God. To respond to God's invitation to belong to Him. For all that God has done – which is all we need – we are called to respond to His offer of life.

### **IT IS FINISHED - LIFE IN BELONGING !**

Tied with this calling is the truth of Jesus' words in John 19: 30 - *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished."* Good Friday saw the finishing as an extinguishing of a candle snuffing out life. Easter Sunday sees finishing as the end of the first act – the crucifixion – followed by the beginning of the second act – the resurrection.

Romans 6 speaks of how we are crucified with Christ – in our inner selves – and how we are also resurrected with Christ – in our inner selves. Romans 8 reminds us therefore that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. If God is for us then who can be against us.

We belong body and soul – in life and in death – to God through faith in God's work through Jesus Christ. There is nothing more that He needs to do to enable His people back to Himself. AND there is nothing in this world that can tear this belonging relationship apart. Neither trouble, nor hardship, nor persecution nor famine nor nakedness nor danger nor sword. Rather we are more than conquerors to the challenges and temptations of the world. Neither death nor life, angels nor demons, not the present nor the future or anything else in creation can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

We are reminded of the Christ candle in that John 1 declares Jesus to be the light of the world and even though the world did not receive Him the darkness of the world could not put it out!

### **APPLICATION / CONCLUSION**

The last words of Jesus and the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that we belong to God in our lives and in our death. That we are forgiven by Jesus' blood and that we are freed to live with His power and grace in this world and in the world yet to come because He provide all that we need. We can therefore live gratefully for all He is and all that He has done for us – in us and through us to the world around us. Now THAT'S a resurrection Sunday.