

The Birthday of our Eternity

Scripture: Colossians 3: 12 – 17 and 2 Corinthians 6: 1 – 13

Each of us wish to become one with God. Each of us wish to make his or her mortal body into the true instrument of the will of God. We have a great and overpowering urge to help others find this wonderful love of God. And in so doing so, we draw closer to God.

We want to help people when they are tired. We want to share their burdens of poverty and despair. We want to cut them away from their chains of bondage and give them the true dignity God intended. We want to fulfill their faith in righteousness.

We want to do all this because we have such love for all the elements of God in humankind. We want a lot, I hope!

It is when we acknowledge the love of God, we create new values in our own life and thus preserve the values that God has created. Nobody can weigh the effort or the value of the sacrifice we make to help others. Only in ourselves will we know when God is satisfied with what we have done.

Laws do not make a good person or a good society, it is the spirit that makes people and society good.

Jesus died so that our spirits might know this and live. We must experience the blood of Jesus. We must not deny the cross that Jesus bore. We do not take up the cross to punish our bodies but we take up the cross to fulfill the will of God, to justify our being, and in the eyes of God, to enable ourselves to be one with God.

The cross of Jesus means we have a permanent progress toward God's true kingdom. The cross means a process of permanent sacrifice by the individual to help lift society to God's level of consciousness and love!

The cross of Jesus and each person's acceptance of the cross, is the foundation upon which humanity can develop. On this redeeming love of Jesus, we can build a new and wonderful standard of mortality. With this new standard of mortality, we can unite men and women. We can invite all classes of society. We can invite mankind with God.

On this Sunday after Easter, we must affirm that Easter has a price. It is our willingness to grow up, to become an adult people, to restore a sense of respect for one another, to restore one's own self-respect, to restore one's sense of accomplishment, and develop a genuine concern for loving and understanding others.

We need to experience a faith that is relevant. We need to stop running and start kneeling!

We must reorder the priorities for our lives. To do so, we must renew our relationship with Jesus. The disciple is a disciples only in so far as he/she shares the Lord's suffering, rejection, and crucifixion. Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus and thus submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross.

I am reminded of a story told about a great symphony conductor, Arturo Toscanini. On one occasion he stopped the orchestra and dismissed the audience when the opera was 2/3 of the way done. The original composer of the opera had not been able to finish it before his life's journey had ended and the opera had to be finished by someone else. So Toscanini stopped the performance and dismissed the audience by saying – 'Here is where the Master laid down his pen!'

You see, the opera remained unfinished for some time. It does not make any difference who you are or how talented you may be, you will come to the end of your life here on earth with only a portion of your work done and only some of your talents developed. But we must always remember that it is impossible to believe that God would begin such an amazing work as he has begun in us by bringing us into life and giving each of us a chance to begin and to grow without also making provision for our continuing development because I say to you – We die and behold we live!

Another story - there was a man who lived with Easter faith in his heart. When he got up in the morning, he got his feet on the floor and in the evening after working a hard day, he put his feet in his bed. He would sleep in peace.

That is an Easter faith. That is what it does for a person. It gives each of us the strength, the peace, and the courage to work hard, play hard, and enjoy living because we know this life will come to an end. And if we die, behold we live again!

Our problem is with all I have shared with you is that the chaos of the world enters into our lives. We watch the news and we become agitated and anxious. We worry the world is falling apart and taking us with it!

Someone will tell us to turn off the news and just stop listening to it. But we continue to spend an excessive amount of time on social media and other news sources.

In a world of panic, are we listening to chaos or are we listening to the voice of Christ which teaches us 'peace'? Christ said – "*My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.*" Jesus said this to the religious leaders of his day and he used this figure of speech to explain himself to them. The religious leaders of his day doubted Jesus place in history.

As the 'Good Shepherd', Jesus said – "*His sheep follow him because they know my voice. They will never follow a stranger in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.*"

As our Good Shepherd, Jesus bids us to hear him above all. May we listen well and find his peace.

Have a great birthday for all eternity! As surely as the tomb was empty on that first Easter morning, Jesus died, and behold he lives again! Listen for the Good Shepherd's voice!

Let us pray:

Loving God, in our noisy world, when you speak to our hearts, minds, and spirit in and through the scriptures, may we hear your voice over all the chaos of this world! AMEN.