

Message

Sunday May 9, 2024

“GOD’S BLESSINGS FOR LIFE ETERNAL”

Pastor Hans Peethala

A young man was walking through a supermarket to pick up a few things when he noticed an old lady following him around. Thinking nothing of it, he ignored her and continued on. Finally, he went to the checkout line, but she got in front of him.

"Pardon me," she said, "I'm sorry if my staring at you has made you feel uncomfortable. It's just that you look just like my son, who just died recently."

"I'm very sorry," replied the young man, "is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," she said, "As I'm leaving, can you say 'Goodbye, Mother!?' It would make me feel so much better."

"Sure," answered the young man.

As the old woman was leaving, he called out, "Goodbye, Mother!"

As he stepped up to the checkout counter, he saw that his total was \$127.50. **"How can that be?" he asked, "I only purchased a few things!"**

"Your mother said that you would pay for her," said the clerk.

Dear Friends! Have you ever said goodbye to any loved one knowing that you will never see them again?

Dear Friends! Saying “Goodbye” to a loved one is extremely painful. There is sadness, grief, pain and suffering as we say goodbye to loved ones. It’s not at all easy to say goodbye to our loved ones. I come across so many who get into depression after losing their loved ones. A lot of people live without any hope. I have heard from many people of other faith say “I don’t know what happens to my loved ones who have died.

Do you know what happens to your loved ones to whom you said Goodbye?

THEME: “GOD’S BLESSINGS FOR LIFE ETERNAL”

Dear Friends! Today is Ascension Day, it’s a day when Jesus ascended into heaven and the disciples said their last goodbye to Jesus.

In the gospel reading in Luke 24:44-53 the disciples say goodbye to Jesus. They know He is not coming back at least for a while. What really fascinates me is the reaction of the disciples as they say goodbye. Something interesting happens as they are ready to wave goodbye.

In Luke’s gospel we heard that Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Something different happens as THE scriptures are opened and the WORD OF GOD is taught to the disciples.

Jesus doesn't preach **Don't worry that I am leaving, I have some money left in your bank and I have spoken to the authorities to give you promotion in your jobs. You will have a permanent job with good salary.**

FIRSTLY, Jesus does something else. **Jesus opens their minds by opening the word of God** "Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, **"Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day."** When Jesus opens his disciples' minds to understand the scriptures (as he had done with the two disciples on the Emmaus Road) **he connects his ministry, death, and resurrection with the threefold** division of Hebrew scriptures -- The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. This is God's age-old plan.

Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures and shared to them the blessings in **Life, Death, and Resurrection** through him as the Saviour of the world. They heard the good news that **Jesus' life, death and resurrection gives a hope to see life beyond death.** This is good news my dear friends.

SECONDLY, Dear Friends! God's word opens our minds to look beyond the grief and suffering we go through in life. It gives us a new hope to life. Luke alone, of the gospel writers, has an **account of the ascension.** The mention here is expanded upon in Acts where the ascension is the bridge and theological foundation for the continuing ministry of the followers of Christ.

Jesus Ascension reminds us there is a continuing ministry and there is a future for us as we live in this world and there is a future beyond this life on earth.

What really got my attention is the reaction of the disciples after their minds were opened after hearing God's word. There was **JOY** in the hearts of the disciples. Happiness is an outer expression and is something that is temporary, **but Joy is an inward expression, it comes from the heart that stay with you forever. The disciples said goodbye with joy in their hearts.**

THIRDLY, How can someone have **JOY** when you are saying your last goodbye?

It was God's power at work through his word that was proclaimed. The word of God reminds us that Jesus opened the scriptures and shared the gift of life, death, and resurrection and finally he blessed them. As he was blessing them, he ascended into heaven. Jesus' blessing was a promise for his presence to go with them always. It was a blessing that God the Father will continue to pour his love and care for each of us.

Jesus Christ will give us his grace and peace and will give us a hope and a future to look forward to and the ever-guiding Holy Spirit will be with us to guide us, to comfort us and to lead us in the paths of righteousness till we reach God's kingdom and meet our loved ones.

Ascension Sunday is an affirmation that things did not end with the death of Jesus and the resurrection was not the end of the story, but in fact was just the beginning of the work of the **gospel.** Jesus had said to his disciples, *"Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, **in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.**"* **John 14:12**

Jesus hands over the ministry of witness but gives them a hope for the future. But there is a warning. The disciples are told not to attempt to continue the ministry of witness until they have received the power of God's Holy Spirit for their kingdom work.

Listen to the hope we have received through Jesus Christ our Lord from Ephesians 1:11-23 “In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.

Let me pray the prayer Paul prays

¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Amen

Luke says “While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God”. They returned with great joy because they returned with a great hope of life beyond death.

They returned with Jesus’ blessings of God’s power at work in their life, death, and resurrection. We don’t have to be depressed because our Saviour lives, and he dwells in us that we may have life for eternal. Amen