

Easter Sunday
Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish
Saint Francisville, LA

27 March 2016

Welcome to this great celebration of Easter. It is good to see you all here in this beautiful church for this wonderful celebration. This year has been extremely interesting for me personally for several reasons. For starters, I turned 50 years old back in February of this year and since then I have began to realize that I don't know as much as I always thought I did. Experts call this wisdom. Wise people allow experience to be their teacher. They acknowledge that all knowledge is by nature limited and insufficient and we don't always have all the facts when making decisions. They know that life is not so much about the accumulation of knowledge, money or power, but rather about the building of loving relationships. They realize that life is transitory and nothing remains for ever. We are here today and we are gone tomorrow. There is a time and there is a season for everything, as life is always evolving, changing, and unfolding.

In Biblical language the love of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This love is described as awe, respect, admiration, total devotion, and, even, fear. The wise person loves God above all things with all heart, mind, and soul. And this love is possible because the wise person makes it a point to remember what God has done for him and his family throughout their lives. In Holy Scripture God's faithfulness is remembered through festivals, family prayers, special meals, hymns of praise, and various liturgies that remind the people of God about who they are, where they have come from, and, most importantly, where they are going.

We are here today to celebrate God's unique and limitless love. We are here to remember together who we are and where we came from. Humans are forgetful creatures who are called by God to remember his love, his protection, and his mercy. The events we remember at Easter are the single most important events the world has ever seen. A crucified, broken, despised, ridiculed, betrayed, and abandoned man, killed as a common criminal, is brought back to life by God's love, that through his death and resurrection people everywhere might find restoration, new life, and redemption. And we are called to remember that all of this took place, not so much because humanity deserved to be rescued, but, rather, because God so loved the world that he gave up his only son to die a miserable death for us. When the wise Christian realizes this most amazing fact, he or she begins to realize that life is not really about us and about what we can do for God. Life is all about God and what he has already done for us in the person and work of his son, Jesus Christ. The wise Christian remembers that God has loved us from the

beginning of creation and that there is nothing that can ever separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Knowing this allows the Christian the freedom to lay our sins, our guilt and our shame at the foot of the cross of Jesus and to be truly free. Free from pain and anxiety. Free from regrets and resentments. Free from isolation and fear. Free from hopelessness and helplessness.

The empty tomb reminds us that we are not alone in the universe. God has always been with us and will always be with us. He is on the side of humanity because he shares in our humanity, and he is not appalled by our brokenness, he is not repelled by our insecurities, he doesn't leave us in our pain even when we betray him and deny him. The empty tomb reminds us that death is not our ultimate destination and the end of the journey. We are eternity-bound. Our ultimate destiny lies beyond the River Jordan, in a place where God reigns supreme, and where his radiance fills the entire universe with love and peace. The empty tomb reminds us that pain has been conquered and that we will one day be with God in a place where suffering, tears, and pain have been conquered for ever, have been vanquished for eternity, a place where death no longer has any dominion over us. The empty tomb reminds us that death has been swallowed up by life and it no longer has any power to terrify us and fill us with anxiety.

My friends we are here today because we need to remember that beauty and love will ultimately win the day. God will ultimately win the day and all the arrogance, sin, corruption, and hatred of the world will be defeated by the one who was able to defeat death. In him we are victorious, and there is nothing anywhere, that has any power to enslave us.

We are here, seating on the same pews where hundreds of your ancestors sat to hear the same message of salvation that gave them hope, during the darkest times of their lives. That message of salvation is simple: Christ has done for us that which we are unable to do for ourselves. And the good news is that Christ did this for us before we had a chance to do anything for God.

Today is a day of celebration, a day of love, and a day of Joy. Today is a day of freedom and life. So, leave your burdens at the foot of this cross today. Leave whatever is afflicting or tormenting you at the foot of this cross and celebrate with me the fact that you are alive, that Christ love you without measure, and that your future is guaranteed. Celebrate with me the fact that death has been defeated and allow yourself to experience freedom and restoration today. Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!