**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

***“I Am The Resurrection”***

*Pastor Matthew Diehl*

April 12th, In the Year of Our Lord 2020

Jesus said to her,

"I am the resurrection and the life;

he who believes in Me will live

even if he dies, (John 11:25)

**Need for The Savior**

For today’s Resurrection Day message, we will go back to the beginning of the Bible and see that the need for a Savior was created due to the Fall of Adam and Eve. Most of the western world is familiar with the story. In Genesis 3, Satan appears as a serpent testing Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We read they chose their own way over God’s. Despite the fact that God specifically told Adam in Genesis 2:17 that if he ate from the forbidden tree he would die. I do not know about you, but if God personally came to me and told me not to do something or I would die, I would not contradict Him. But then there is human pride and ego, and the “me first” psyche with which God equipped all of us. God not only gave Adam, and all of us a choice, He gave us the ability to choose opposite of His wishes. It is one thing to say “not to run” to a person with no legs who you know cannot run, but tell an elementary age child not to run who has all the physical components to run. We constantly tell the children in the After-School program not to run in the building. However, they do not follow our request. We must constantly remind them.

Adam and Eve ran when God told them not to run. At one point in our lives, we all ran when God said not to run. As a result, God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden so they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever. When I first read this passage in Genesis 3:22, I said, “Wait! Is not that what God wants us to do? Live forever!?” Then I thought, why would God not want Adam and Eve to live forever? Because they would live forever in a fallen state. God removed them from the Garden and gave them the opportunity to repent and seek forgiveness of their sin. They eventually did. We see Eve acknowledging that it was God who allowed her to have another son to replace Abel (Genesis 4:25). This indicates that she was back in a proper relationship with God.

It is of the most importance that we see God cursed the serpent and declared that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. This is a direct prophecy directed at the Messiah to come. This is what Jesus did to Satan in the Test in the Wilderness in Matthew 4 and at the Resurrection in the Gospel accounts.

**Effects of the Fall**

It did not take long after the fall of Adam and Eve for the first murder to take place. Their son, Cain, murders his brother Abel, due to his choice to be bitter about his relationship with God.

God told Cain that sin is crouching at his door (Genesis 4:7). This is the same situation we all find ourselves daily. Bad choices present themselves to us constantly. So, the sin story continues and worsens in the life of man.

It needs to go with a note that Abel was a man approved by God because of His faith (Genesis 4:4, Hebrews 11:1-4). Cain had bitterness in his heart towards God, and then Abel. Cain did bring an offering to God but only in the course of time when he got around to it.

We soon have the account of Noah and the flood in Genesis 6. It is clear that God wanted to wipe the earth clean of rebellious people and start again with only eight people, Noah and his family. Even with this reboot, humanity faltered. However, God in His great love continued to come to people and give them an opportunity to have a relationship with him.

**Salvation Through Faith Witnessed**

In Genesis 12, God comes to Abraham in about 2000 B.C. Abraham is the patriarch of this people group that became known as the Hebrews. God chose to make a faith-covenant with Abraham that would bless all the people of the earth (Genesis 12:3). God promises to Abraham, and all the nations, that a relationship with God will be founded on faith (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3). Remember, faith is what approved Abel to God. So, Faith was from the beginning bridging the relationship between God and man. Adam and Eve had faith. They trusted God and followed His ways until they decided not to follow His ways.

God remains true to His word with Abraham and his wife Sarah despite their failings. Eventually, through God’s interaction, Sarah, in her old age, births a child, Isaac, who in turn fathers Jacob, who fathers Joseph.

God demonstrated the faith of Abraham when He asked him to take Isaac to the altar of sacrifice (Genesis 22). God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac; He used the event as a witness to Abraham’s faith. Faith is what justified Abraham to God. Faith made Abraham righteous (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:11). God also showed that He was not like all the pagan gods that called for people to sacrifice their children. God provided a ram for the sacrifice instead of Isaac. This is a depiction of the Cross of Jesus. God incarnated Himself as Jesus and became a substitute sacrifice for our sins. This is called “substitutionary atonement.” God loved us so much that He became one of us to accomplish substitutionary atonement for all.

**The Law – A Tutor to Faith - Galatians 3:24**

Many years after Joseph’s death, God calls Moses to lead the people from Egypt. Exodus 1 begins the account of the epic journey. During the Exodus from Egypt is when God gives the Hebrews the Law. The Ten Commandments represent the Law and all its details. The Law is considered the first five books of the Bible. This is also called the Pentateuch or Torah. Paul talks about the purpose of the Law and the circumstance of why God provided the Law.

**Galatians 3:** 17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

The reason the Law was given was due to the hardness of the hearts of the Hebrew people.

**Galatians 3:19** Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

The Law was to guide them, not a mechanism that removed the debt of sin (Hebrews 10: 1ff). God used the Law to show the Hebrew people, and all humanity, that we will always fail in our attempt to keep the whole Law. We make too many mistakes. In our time, you can say that one day we will speed 56 mph in a 55-speed zone.

**Where Does God Tell us His Plan?**

One of many is in the Law itself. One of the first five books in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 30:6ff details that God wants our hearts circumcised, then we are enabled follow in His ways. Once we surrender our heart to the conviction of God’s Holy Spirit is when our hearts are circumcised. We then belong to the Lord forever. We will make mistakes, but we confess our sins, and God is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1). We see this with David who makes bad decisions and prays for God not to take His Holy Spirit from him (Psalm 51).

God calls upon us to ask Him to take our sins away. God then gives us a clean heart and places His Spirit within us. We see a great testimony to this in Ezekiel 36. In these verses, God is addressing the Hebrew people. If Israel asks God, He will give a person a new heart and place His Spirit in them.

We see this in Acts 2 after Peter preached to the Jews who were part of the group who called for Jesus to be crucified. God’s Holy Spirit preached through Peter. Thus, the Jews there were convicted and surrendered to God’s Holy Spirit. How do we know this? Acts 2:36ff specifically details this salvation experience. The Jews there called-out to God, “What must we do?” Then the application of God’s salvation movement, as previously expressed in Ezekiel 36, took place.

Jesus witnesses to Nicodemus in John 3 the same salvation reality. Jesus calls this process “born again of spirit.” When this takes place, God will place His Spirit inside their heart. This is what the Cross makes possible. The surrender to God’s Holy Spirit conviction allows faith to function, thereby, accessing the power of the Cross and substitutionary atonement.

Today, in 2020, four thousand years since Abraham was approached by God with the promise of justification by faith, we too have the same offering from God. It was thousands of years before Abraham when Abel was approved by God due to his faith. God never changed. God always made it possible to have a saving relationship with Him through faith.

Jesus said in **John 14:**1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 "And you know the way where I am going." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. 7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

So, where does this statement take us. Is Christianity exclusive? No. No, because the Cross is for everyone who ever lived regardless if they know about its power. I mean, who did all the work on the Cross? Did you? Did your neighbor? Did someone else in history go to the Cross? No.

First, Jesus said, “It is Finished!”, from the Cross. All the work for everyone’s salvation was accomplished by Jesus on the Cross. No one else. This means He paid our debt for sin. This is the substitutionary atonement. What can a person add to the Cross to save themselves? Did God incarnate Himself, go to the Cross because He left out something, something for you to do? God endures the arrest, beatings, broken legs and sword piercing because He left something for you to do? This is why the Law does not save a person. The Law did not go to the Cross.

In Revelation 20:11, there is the Great White Throne Judgement and the Books of Deeds are opened along with the Book of Life, the Lamb’s book of life. Those who choose to be judged by their deeds are judged exactly how they chose to be judged. It is their choice. Those who choose to be judged by Faith are judged by their faith.

**Is there an example of the difference in judgment by deeds or faith in the Bible?**

There are many. Let’s go to the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in

**Luke 18:10-14** 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Who do you want to be?

**Revelation 22:16-17** 16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

AMEN