U.H.P.C. WORSHIP—APRIL 28, 2019

SERMON TOPIC:- “ACTIVITY & WITNESS OF THE RISEN CHRIST”

A number of significant happenings took place on the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and some significant statements were made that should convince everyone to believe and to know that this AWESOME, NEW, AND GREAT THING REALLY HAPPENED. IT BROUGHT ABOUT A CHANGE THAT WOULD HAVE A GLOBAL AND UNIVERSAL EFFECT ON EVERY HUMAN LIFE. WE SHOULD KNOW WHY IT HAPPENED, AND WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR EACH ONE OF US AND TO THE WHOLE WORLD. 1:- IT HAPPENED SO THAT SCRIPTURE MIGHT BE FULFILLED. 2:-IT HAPPENED THAT ALL WHO BELIEVE WOULD BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT, AND HAVE RESURRECTED LIFE WITHIN FOR ETERNITY. 3:- IT HAPPENED TO PROVE THAT THE FATHER GAVE RESURRECTION LIFE TO THE SON, AND AUTHORIZED HIM TO GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM AND OBEY HIM.

There was a lot of excitement, confusion, rejoicing, and fear going on in Jerusalem in the early days of the Good News of the resurrection of the One who was recently crucified. The civil and religious authorities were terrified at such a news. They wanted to put a stop to this massive movement. But Peter spoke up and said to the authorities: **“We must obey God and not man. The God of our Ancestors raised up Jesus whom you killed by hanging on a tree. (BUT) Jehovah exalted Him as Leader and Savior that He might give repentance to Israel for the forgiveness of sins.** WE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS; ALSO BEARING WITNESS IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO OBEY HIM.” Why did Peter and the other disciples say this? They said it because the rulers of Jerusalem were forbidding them from preaching, teaching, and healing with such fervor and power that great conversion of many was happening and the people were turning to the New Way of Salvation by Grace through Faith. Dramatic changes were taking place. The authorities even accused the disciples of trying to bring this man’s blood upon them and they were turning the city up-side-down.

You see –IT WAS A NEW DAY IN JERUSALEM AND ALSO FOR THE WHOLE WORLD! A NEW THING HAD HAPPENED THAT HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE. JESUS HAD OVERCOME DEATH AND THE GRAVE AND HE WAS MOVING AROUND AMONG HIS DISCIPLES IN HIS GLORIFIED FORM. THE DEVASTATION OF GOOD FRIDAY HAD NOW TURNED INTO NEW HOPE AND REJOICING. IT COULD NOT BE SNUFFED OUT. IT COULD NOT BE SILENCED. EVERYONE WHO HEARD AND SAW WAS AMAZED AND HAD TO GO AND TELL IT. John wrote in Chap. 20: 19… that on the evening of the first day of the week when Jesus arose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples and greeted them with His peace. He showed them His nail-pierced hands and His wounded side. When they saw Him, their sorrow turned to joy, and they began to rejoice. AGAIN, HE REPEATED: **“Peace be with you!” Then He added: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”**  JESUS WAS APPEARING TO HIS DISCIPLES WHILE THEY LOCKED THEMSELVES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN FEAR OF THE AUTHORITIES. HE ENTERED AND STOOD AMONG THEM WITHOUT OPENING THE DOOR. He spoke to them and revealed His authentic and glorified, wounded body to them. According to His Promise to us, we too will be like Him at the appointed time. In our Creed, we say: “WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY AND LIFE EVERLASTING.” Therefore, we believe we will be raised to new life. That new life begins when we confess, repent, believe, and are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We continue to study, learn, serve, faithfully through “thick or thin” until we receive our eternal reward of abundant and eternal life with Him.

But Jesus did not stop there. He continued by saying to them: **“As the Father has sent me, so send I you.”** This means we are not called, blessed, and spirit filled just to sit around. We are saved to go and serve according to the Grace and Gifts that God has given to us. --- Another important activity that took place was this: Thomas, one of the original disciples, was not present with the others at the first appearance of Jesus on the evening of the first day of the week. (EVER WONDERED WHERE HE WAS?...WHY HAD HE SEPARATED HIMSELF FROM THE OTHERS IN THE TIME OF GRIEF AND LOSS?--) Well maybe he was somewhere nursing his own wounds of disappointment, feeling like Jesus had deceived them somehow. As it turned out, when the other disciples met Thomas, they shared their experience with Him. He declared he would never believe such a story unless he saw Jesus for Himself. THAT WAS THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK ON THE FIRST SUNDAY EVENING OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. So, on the second Sunday, they once again gathered. On this occasion, Thomas was present with them. AND GUESS WHAT? Jesus miraculously showed up again. He granted Thomas his wish by showing him His wounded hands and side. THOMAS RESPONDED: “MY LORD AND MY GOD!” Jesus said to him: **“Thomas, you believe because you have seen; but more blessed are those who believe but do not see.”** To believe without seeing requires greater faith than those who believe because they see. SO TO WHAT GROUP DO YOU BELONG? IF YOU DO BELIEVE WITHOUT SEEING, YOU WILL SEE MORE OF THE RESURRECTION EVIDENCE REVEALED TO YOU. In Revelation 1: 4-8, Jesus revealed Himself in vision to John and declared Himself to be: “THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END.” HE TOLD JOHN THAT HE WAS THE ONE WHO WAS, WHO IS, AND WHO IS TO COME. HE WAS, AND IS, THE FAITHFUL WITNESS AND THE FIRST BORN FROM THE DEAD. HE IS, AND WAS, THE RULER OF ALL THE RULERS OF THE EARTH; HE IS THE ONE WHO FREED US FROM SIN BY THE SHEDDING OF HIS BLOOD TO MAKE US A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS FOREVER. AMEN!

Let me ask: “How meaningful and significant is all this to us as church and as individual believers? I invite us to meditate on this more often. Think about who He is and what it means to us and for us. HERE IS THE BEST PART: He who died, was buried, and rose again will be coming back in the cloud just like He ascended in the cloud from the Mt. of Olives. Every eye shall behold Him… even those who pierced His side; and they SHALL WAIL IN ANGUISH AT HIS PRESENCE. With all the new technology in place, this promise is no longer a remote possibility or fantasy. The stage is set for this to happen right now in reality.

Every once in a while, we need to reflect and ask ourselves questions like:
“WHO IS THIS AWESOME GOD? -- WHO IS THIS REDEEMER? --WHO IS THIS SAVIOR, LORD, RULER, AND KING? IF HE IS TRULY THE RISEN CHRIST AS THE ANGEL REPORTED, AS HE SAID HIMSELF, AND AS THE DISCIPLES THEMSELVES HAVE REPORTED, WHY THEN ARE PEOPLE STILL IN DOUBT LIKE THOMAS? IT SEEMS LIKE PEOPLE STILL DOUBT THAT THERE IS A HEAVEN AND A HELL? ARE PEOPLE STILL NOT CONVINCED AS YET THAT ALL THAT HE DID WAS DONE FOR OUR SAKES? DID HE NOT DO ALL THIS TO MAKE A WAY FOR US/THEM TO ESCAPE ETERNAL DAMNATION AND SEPARATION FROM OUR LOVING CREATOR AND LORD? --HOW MUCH MORE EVIDENCE DOES GOD HAVE TO GIVE TO THE WORLD TO MAKE THEM/US BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE REMEDY FOR OUR SIN? ---THAT THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE? -- IF WE BELIEVE, WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT? WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? HE REVEALED HIMSELF TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED AND OBEYED HIM. To believe is good, but to believe and obey is better. If we really believe and appreciate what Jehovah God has done for us through Christ Jesus the Son, we would be really thrilled and filled with joy. If we could grasp and comprehend the greatness and intensity of the love of God for us made manifest in the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ for us, we would not be able to cease from rejoicing and praising our God. We would do as David recommends in Psalm 150. He invites us and encourages us to GLORIFY, HONOR, AND PRAISE JEHOVAH OUR GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. “Let everything that has breath PRAISE THE LORD!” PRAISE HIM WITH CYMBALS, WITH LYRE, WITH TAMBORINES, WITH ORGAN, WITH PIANO, WITH VOICES, AND WITH ANYTHING ELSE YOU / WE CAN FIND!! WHY? BECAUSE HIS RESURRECTION SETS HIM APART FROM ANY OTHER TEACHER, PREACHER, MIRACLE WORKER, HEALER; ANY PROPHET, MESSIAH, AND ANY KING OR PRIEST. ALTHOUGH HE IS ALL OF THESE TOGETHER, HE IS STILL MORE. HE IS UNIQUE IN THAT HE HAS THE POWER OF LIFE IN HIM TO GIVE NEW LIFE AND LIGHT TO US, TO MAKE US NEW CREATURES, TO GIVE US A NEW DESTINY, NEW IDENTITY, NEW CHARACTER, NEW HOPE, NEW ABILITIES, NEW GIFTS, NEW LOVE, NEW STRENGTH, ETC. HE IS IN THE FATHER AND THE FATHER IS IN HIM. HE AND THE FATHER ARE ONE. ALL LIFE ORIGINATES IN THE FATHER. WHEN JESUS SHOWED UP TWICE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, THAT DAY OF THE WEEK BECAME WHAT WE NOW CALL: “THE LORD’S DAY.” SOME PREFER TO GATHER ON SATURDAY, AND AS LONG AS THEY ARE GATHERING IN HIS NAME, HE WILL BE AMONG THEM; FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED IN HIS NAME HE WILL BE THERE.  **HE** IS NOW OUR SABBATH REST BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH. THOSE WHO ARE IN HIM HAVE HIS SABBATH REST WITH THEM AND IN HIM AT ALL TIMES. Paul instructed us not to build our faith on arguments about days, or food, or clothing… but to **build our foundation on Christ who has fulfilled all things for us.** HE HIMSELF IS TO BECOME THE CENTRALITY OF OUR FAITH. He told the woman of Samaria that there would be a time when worship on a specific mountain, or in the tabernacle, or outdoors, or in the synagogue, will be immaterial and insignificant, for it will be a new day when a new thing will be in vogue. FOR HE, JESUS THE RISEN CHRIST, WILL BE THE FOCUS OF ALL WORSHIP. HE HIMSELF WOULD BE OUR SABBATH REST.

SO, ARE WE THERE YET? NOT QUITE, BUT ALMOST. WE ARE GETTING NEARER AND NEARER EVERY DAY. LET US KEEP OUR EYES AND MINDS FIXED UPON HIM AND KEEP HIS NAME IN OUR MOUTH AND ON OUR LIPS, FOR IT IS HE WHO HAS PURCHASED OUR SALVATION, GIVEN US ABUNDANT—GREATER—DEEPER LIFE, AND ETERNAL LIFE.  **ONLY BELIEVE AND DO NOT DOUBT.** --NO ONE CAN SATISFY OUR THIRSTY AND HUNGRY SOULS BUT THE RISEN CHRIST JESUS. --NO ONE ELSE EVEN KNOWS OR CARES THAT WE HAVE A SOUL THAT NEEDS TO BE REBORN FROM ABOVE BUT JESUS THE RISEN CHRIST. -- NO ONE ELSE HAS EVER BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD WITH EYE WITNESSES TO PROVE IT. HE WENT UP AND HAS PROMISED TO COME BACK AND WILL BRING WITH HIM A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH, A NEW JERUSALEM WHERE THERE WILL BE ETERNAL HOPE, JOY, PEACE, PROSPERITY, LOVE. THERE WILL BE NO MORE DEATH, NO MORE PAIN, NO MORE SORROW, AND NO MORE GRIEF. THERE WILL BE JUSTICE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND TRUTH EVERYWHERE. IF THE RISEN CHRIST SAYS SO, WE CAN BE SURE THAT IT WILL HAPPEN JUST LIKE HE SAID.

May the Holy Spirit seal the Word in our hearts and minds and manifest it in our lives, I pray. May the resurrection life and power in Christ Jesus penetrate our lives according to God’s will for us, and for the world at large and never return void. With this power within us, we tell mountains to move, demons to flee, sickness and disease to leave, obstructions to depart, doubt to flee, and disobedience to go. By that same power we speak life. We speak Salvation. We speak hope, deliverance, joy, love, peace, strength, confidence, and trust. In the Name of Christ Jesus in whom all things are held together and in whom all things consist, we believe it is done and we give thanks.

AMEN.