THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION
Rolling Meadows - 1964

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

I Corinthians 15: 17,18,20 If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are ye in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.....But now is Christ risen from the dead.

I F

You remember Pontius Pilate. He has so large a part in the Creed and in the Passion Story. He was a man who had power and was proud of it. His job was t maintain the dignity of empire and the might of Caesar among a conquered people. But there came a day when, in spite of his power, he became uneasy and worried and all his people with him. "Pilate you have to do something - Now that Jesus is dead and buried and finished and put away in the grave - to make sure there are no tric - you must do something Pilate - you must take precautions." This is the way it happened - the most pathetic sentence ever spoken, "Ye have a watch, go your way, make the tomb as sure as you can." The man was mad. If you were to see a man standing in the gray of dawn shouting at the sun, "You cannot arise!" or if you saw a mar standing on the shores of the Pacific in Alaska, after the terrible earthquake, shouting at the tidal waves, "Stop, you cannot come back," then you would understand about this Roman who thought that he could barricade the tomb of Christ.

Every Easter is the same - always the question, Is this true? Did it happen? What if by any chance we are mistaken - if Pilate was not quite so patheti after all? It is a horrible, dismal idea. (But what if Christ compels us to think about it - If Christ be not raised - He forces this upon us through His disciple.) John Henry Newman has a passage which is unforgettable - he says, It is just as if I were to look into a mirror and not see my face - terrifying situation - looking straight into a mirror and seeing only a blank. It is the same shudder of the soul that St. Paul here creates - If Christ be not raised. Or if the earth would suddenly break out of its orbit, and instead of circling the sun, it whirled farther and farther away and, at last, the truth broke upon us - WE ARE DOOMED. It is the same weird, wild shudder that meets us here - If Christ be not raised. We have to look it squarely in the face. Challengingly, bluntly, St. Paul sets it down.

If Christ be not raised - what then? First, this - Your faith is vain. All the trust you have ever put in God - one huge mistake! All the brave confidenc

- smashed, wrecked forever! Your faith in God is gone and finished! Why? Becaus Jesus, who had lived an absolutely perfect life - crucified, dead, buried, and tha was all! Jesus, trusting God would deliver Him - Jesus, believing that God would "not leave His soul in Hell nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption" - And God doing nothing! St. Paul says you cannot trust God after that - neither His love, no His power.

You cannot trust His love! In Mary Webb's story, Precious Bane, there i a woman with a great heart who says, "It always seemed a strange thing to me that the mother of Jesus could keep her hands off the Centurion, and it must have been because He told her to. But if it had been me, I think I should have forgotten th orders." If that is true of human love, is it not strange that God could have watched the tragedy on Calvary and do nothing? They tell the story of King Clovis, the barbarian, who heard a missionary reading the ~~story of Jesus~~ Passion Play and said, "Oh, If I had only been there with my Franks! We would have charged up the slopes and taught those Romans a lesson." But if God, watching Calvary, did nothing - left it at that - and knew this was the end of Jesus forever - then you ~~could~~ can join Huxley in saying, "I find not one evidence that God is Love." "YOUR FAITH IS VAIN."

And then you cannot trust His power either. The clash on Calvary is not only between Jesus and His enemies, but between God and the ~~devil~~ demonic - world powers grappling here. And if the Cross finished things, you can hear the howl all over hell: "We win! We win! God is beaten!" POWER? says Paul - If Christ be not raised, do not tell me God has power. "Your faith is vain!"

What about us? - Is our faith in God such an important thing that it woul matter to us if we lost it? Is there any difference? We are sometimes rather vague and indifferent about it anyway. It often seems so unimportant, but if our faith were one day threatened with extinction - if life wanted to take it way - you would be on your feet in a minute, crying, "Let that alone - for God's sake - leave me that." It does matter! You cannot live without it. And, if Christ be not raised, it is gone!

And now the other side - if Christ is risen from the dead, then faith in

God is crowned, justified, vindicated! Then in the darkest day of my life I am sa

"Tell me," said one of Luther's enemies to him sneeringly - "Tell me, when the whole world turns against you - the church, state, princes, people - where will you be then?"..."Where shall I be then?" cried Luther, "Why, then as now, in the Hands of Almighty God." If Christ ~~be~~ was raised from the dead, you and I can be Luthers too.

Turn to the second thing: "If Christ be not raised, ye are ~~yet~~ still in your si

All the talk about being forgiven is pure delusion. All the noble words about God putting ~~my~~ our sins behind His back, or making the crimson garment white as snow again - all ~~mere~~ pure mockery. "Ye are ~~yet~~ still in your sins" - gripped, prisoned, coffined, confined slaves for life. Why is that involved? - Because, if the Cross was the end, Christ's brave, pathetic attempt to be a Savior failed - because the sins of the men who slew Him had the last word - because Jesus, seeing the drift of ~~the~~ a hateful world, had tried to stop it and the tides had overwhelmed Him - they rolled over His dead body unheeding. Now there is no escape from the clutching hand of the pas - no deliverance from the downward drag of our own souls - no hope to be purchased and won by the precious blood of Christ, our Lord. "Ye are ~~yet~~ still in your sins." Sir Oliver Lodge, British scientist, says that modern man is not worrying about his sin - still less about forgiveness. But, you see, if forgiveness goes, then peace goes and freedom goes, and happiness goes, and heaven goes. No wonder the cry goes up, not from the church alone, but from the heart of all mankind: You shall not take this away - you cannot!

It does matter! You cannot live without forgiveness. Carlyle has a terrible sentence where he imagines a man trying to run away from his shadow. But always it is there. Finally he is panting and exhausted and beaten and cries out, God, God, I cannot get away from it. I cannot. That is sin - or is it guilt if there is no forgiveness. (Always a man is left wondering - That old unhappy deed - when will it will haunt you to the grave spring on Me? Where will it strike and how?) King Herod slew John the Baptist in prison. Months later he heard about Jesus and suddenly he trembled - This must be John back again - the man I killed - back from the dead. Forgiveness does matter! It matter

so much that you cannot live without it; and if Christ be not raised, it is gone. you can join the old confession of the Ch.

But if Christ is risen, then sin is defeated. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.

Turn to the third thing: If Christ ~~be not~~ has not been raised, then they also ~~which~~ who ~~are~~ have fallen asleep in Christ ~~are~~ have perished. Think of it, all the blessed departed - annihilated, destroyed forever - blown out of existence as you would blow out a candle - cast as rubbish to the wind - never to be met again. Why? Need you ask? If Christ never rose, how should they? If the one finally perfect life that has ever appeared on earth did not get through this thing called death, how should anyone else? Does it matter? Ask it the other way. Does anything else matter? As long as love is love, as long as one human heart cleaves and clings to another, it does matter! You cannot live without it! When the day comes for you to die, you will want the chariots of God to carry you through - you will want the angels of God to bring you home. The Venerable Bede ~~shows~~ pictures man's life in the image of a bird flying out of the dark into a brilliantly lighted banquet hall, flying across the brilliance for a moment, then out at the other window - out into the night again. Is that the real picture? Then we can only say to God that it is cruel of Him to put such love in our hearts and snap it in the end. But that is what life is, if Christ ~~is~~ not raised.

But if Christ is raised from the dead, then those who they which are fallen asleep in Jesus are alive! Cromwell, dying, calls aloud, Is there no one here who will praise the Lord? This is the new note. Death cannot rob us.

St. Paul has looked at the grim thought of Christ not risen - in the face, and has drawn the three inescapable conclusions - then faith is gone - then forgiveness is gone - then reunion is gone. Then, while a shudder is passing over his hearers, there comes his glorious triumph - "But ~~now is~~ in fact Christ has been raised from the dead," and every word of it is a trumpet note, a shout, a battle cry, to sweep the horror from our souls. If you ask him, Paul, how do you know it? he answers, Know it? - I have spoken to the men who have seen Him! Peter, Andrew, John, and a hundred others -

men who forsook Him and fled, but men who had their whole life turned around changed from top to bottom by the experience of seeing Him.

But Paul had even greater evidence. How do I know it? I have seen Him myself - seen Him with my own eyes. To anyone suggesting that Christ was not reall alive, Paul could answer, "He stopped me, going to Damascus, and He has been the power in my life ever since. I have seen Him, and I know." This is Paul, who can write, "It is not I who live but Christ who lives in me" - I have actually felt His presence and His power. ~~This we must~~ and Now it is for us to say after him. Because then we have the evidence in our own hearts. You can listen to Savanarola dying, and you can say it with him, "They may kill me if they please - but they will never, never, never, tear the Living Christ from my heart." (Now it is Easter!) Amen.

God give each of you that kind of Easter security!