

46 Celebrating the Day

*“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
(Psalm 118:24)*

There is a story of a little boy who came home from Sunday School on Easter Sunday very excited about what he had learned. He raced into the kitchen and shouted, “Wow, I learned what Jesus said when He burst out of the tomb on Easter morning!” His mom and dad were excited too, and they asked him, “Well what did He say on the first Easter morning?” And the little boy ran up to them, threw his hands up in the air, and shouted “TA-DA!” (Bimler, p. 14).

Obviously, the young boy has paraphrased Jesus a little bit. I suspect, though, that he is capturing the essence of joy and celebration that were evident that first Easter morning. “TA-DA—Here I am! I am alive, just as I said!” As a result, our lives are “TA-DA!” lives. We are able to enter each day in the confidence that Jesus is alive. Wherever we go, we give witness and bear testimony to the truth that Jesus is alive and ready to reveal Himself. Even in those days when the challenges are overwhelming, Christ stands ready to say to us, “TA-DA!” His resurrection gives us the ability to say with joyous defiance, *“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24)*. What day is the Psalmist referring to in this verse? Look two verses earlier at verse 22:

“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (vv. 22-24).

What so many thought to be worthless (the life of Christ, and so they discarded it), God raises up and uses as the cornerstone for what He is building. The day He has made is the Day of Resurrection, which makes every day a “TA-DA!” day—a day for rejoicing and celebrating. The joy of the resurrection is so great and timeless that it cannot be confined to one single day.

Martin Luther offers this thought regarding it:

“This is the time of the New Testament, a different day from that which the good sun daily makes. Here the Lord Himself is the Sun. He creates this day with its light and splendor. This day is not followed by night, nor does its light shine into the eyes of the body; it shines into the heart . . . This light teaches grace, peace, and forgiveness of sins before God, of which reason knows nothing . . . This is a happy day, as the psalmist here rejoices and says, ‘Let us be glad!’ The light and teaching of grace gives the heart peace, rest and joy in Christ. It realizes that its sins are without merit, that it is delivered from death, and that in God it forever has a gracious Father through Christ, as St. Paul says (Rom. 5:1): ‘Therefore since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ And then he further describes this peace and joy as something that endures in tribulation and gives courage. No unbeliever can know anything of this joy

and peace, nor can those who by their works endeavor to be pious and wipe out their sins . . . What could be more precious and nobler than an enlightened heart, a heart that knows God and all things, a heart that can judge rightly and speak truly in all things before God? Where could there be a higher or greater joy than in a happy, secure and fearless conscience, a conscience that trusts in God and fears neither the world nor the devil?" (Luther's Works, Vol. 14, p. 100).

If, then, there is to be celebration, let it be today. Why wait? So often we fall into the illusion that joy will come. We try to sing "The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow," but it is not only our voice that ends up flat. We go to school and think, "I will be happy tomorrow." Then we graduate and get married. She or he is not exactly what we bargained for and we say, "I will be happy tomorrow." It never ends. Resurrection faith says in the face of it all, "*This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*" We have seen through the eyes of faith what God can do with what others saw as worthless. The day we are in can then be redeemed by this same power.

Can this be said in the presence of tragedy? What I have seen in ministry is that so often it is precisely in these moments that those touched most deeply by suffering experience the joy of hope.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:1-5).

Jeremy Camp, a Christian songwriter, had only been married for a few months when his wife, Melissa, was diagnosed with cancer. She had come home from the hospital and asked him to get his guitar so that they could sing and worship. The song she wanted him to play was, "For You Are Good." Even in the midst of her dying, Melissa knew that God alone deserved the praise that her heart could offer. Weeks after Melissa's death, Jeremy wrote a song entitled, "I Still Believe":

Scattered words and empty thoughts
Seem to pour from my heart.
I've never felt so torn before,
Seems I don't know where to start.
But it's now that I feel your grace
fall like rain From every fingertip,
washing away my pain.

I still believe in your faithfulness.
I still believe in your truth.
I still believe in your Holy Word,
Even when I don't see, I still believe.

Though the questions still fog up my mind
With promises, I still seem to bear,
Even when answers slowly unwind,
It's my heart I see you prepare.
But it's now that I feel your grace
fall like rain From every fingertip,
washing away my pain.

I still believe in your faithfulness.
I still believe in your truth.
I still believe in your Holy Word,
Even when I don't see, I still believe.

The only place I can go is into your arms,
Where I throw to you my feeble prayers.
In brokenness I can see that this was your
will for me.
Help me to know you are near.

I still believe in your faithfulness.
I still believe in your truth.
I still believe in your Holy Word,
Even when I don't see, I still believe.

Even in the midst of pain or in days when we are confused and torn, the Cross assures us of God's love, and the empty Tomb proclaims His victory. I love the words from Romans 8:

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that has loved us" (v. 37).

No matter what Satan throws at us, no matter how unfairly the world treats us, we are more than conquerors. We do not merely win out over evil because Christ—He even takes every wound, every hurt, every failure, and

weaves them into the fabric of our life's story. More than conquerors.

Today is the day.

"This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Christ is ready to reveal Himself as the Victor. Today is a "TA-DA!" day!

Prayer: Father, this is the day which you have made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.

Amen.

Challenge: Memorize Psalm 118:24 and repeat it to yourself throughout the day.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 118

From the Book of Concord: "This faith uplifts, sustains, and gives life to the contrite, according to the passage [Rom. 5:1]: 'Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God.' This faith receives the forgiveness of sins. This faith justifies before God, as the same passage testifies, 'since we are justified by faith.' This faith shows the difference between the contrition of Judas and Saul on the one hand, and Peter and David on the other. The contrition of Judas or Saul was useless for the reason that it lacked the faith that grasps the forgiveness of sins granted on account of Christ" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII: Repentance, p. 192:36).