

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, March 17, 2024, based on John 12

“Seeds of Resurrection”

I used to love watching *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* with my grandparents, especially when Regis Philbin was the host. He would always ask the contestants who were on the brink of taking the money or risking it all, “Is that your final answer?”

For us Christians, death is not the final answer, but a new beginning... a new beginning in heaven for those who die in Jesus Christ... a new beginning for those who continue on after a loved one dies... a new beginning after we sin... and a new beginning when something dies in creation.

The other day, my daughter and I were walking to the bus. She noticed some green blades of grass rising out of the brown blanket of earth. She was thrilled. “Look, Green Grass.” Spring is coming, I said.

In our Gospel Jesus calls himself a grain of wheat to describe his upcoming death and resurrection to his disciples. This is after some Greeks or Gentiles heard about Jesus and all his signs and want to see him. But Jesus goes changes the subject and talks about his death. By him dying and rising like a seed, all will be included in the promise of new life he offers.

In our Gospel Jesus finally says, “my hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” The whole Gospel Jesus would say, my hour has not yet come. In John's gospel, the hour means Jesus' true glory will be found on the cross. He then says, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit.”

Isn't that the truth. One little seed, when buried in the ground, with proper soil, water, sunlight, and heat, can produce 10, 100 or 1000 fold. Watching seeds grow is a miracle in itself. I am even more amazed when things grow that you don't plant. We used to have a bird feeder in North Dakota with corn stalks and sunflowers growing under it on a bed of rocks, thanks to seeds dropping to the ground. This year, I am wondering how many mystery squash we will have. I accidentally left a few squash in the garden over the

winter. After the snow melted, they were hollowed out with seeds lying everywhere.

You get the point. As we move toward Holy Week starting next weekend, In addition to waving palms and donkey walk, we will read the passion of Jesus. We will explore the last week of Jesus' life... his betrayal, arrest, trial, abandonment, and crucifixion. If you have ever watched Mel Gibson's movie, the passion of the Christ, it is something you will never forget. The amount of pain and suffering Jesus went through was illustrated on the big screen.

But as we will see on Easter, death is not the final answer.

In First Corinthians 15, Jesus is described as the first fruits of the resurrection. In our baptism and faith, we are promised the same journey from death into life that Jesus took. Therefore, we can live confidently knowing the promise of what the future holds. But not only the future, but now. We have many days when we experience loss, disappointment, failure, and mistakes. There is new life in Jesus after those things too. There is forgiveness and reconciliation. There is reason for hope.

Think about it, even after the resurrection, Jesus appeared with his wounds and scars. You would think his body would be perfect in the resurrection. We too appear every day with our wounds or scars from the past. But thanks be to God and the new covenant in Jesus blood, there is grace for us and for our past. God remembers our sin no more. New life.

When we go through life, it is hard to make it through unscathed. We will do things that cause suffering for ourselves and others. We will experience broken relationships. We will experience grief and loss. We will make terrible mistakes. We will lose our faith and hope from time to time.

Even Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Son of God, said in our Gospel, "my soul is troubled?" We know this feeling of a troubled soul.

But the word of God is a seed that sprouts new life in us. When God's word is planted, read and heard, digested, and practiced, new life can happen. But it takes time. The Holy Spirit works faith in us so we can bear good fruit.

Jesus' word gives us hope even after the worst day. It gives us confidence to go on living no matter what befalls us or what the ruler of the world tries to throw at us.

Finally, to quote a hymn in WOV *You are the seed*. "You are the seed that will grow a new sprout; you're the star that will shine in the night; you are the yeast and a small grain of salt, a beacon to glow in the dark. You are the dawn that will bring a new day; you're the wheat that will bear golden grain; you are the sting and a soft gentle touch, to witness wherever you go. Go my friends, go to the world, proclaim the great love of God; messengers to tell the way of life, peace and pardon for all. Keep sowing the seeds of Christ. you never know when they will germinate and sprout up.

Amen!