

Pastor Brian'
Mid Week Message
April 22, 2020

“WELL WHADDAYA KNOW?”

"After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits." 1 Peter 3:19
In the Apostle's Creed there is a sentence that is both unique and very much misunderstood. *"He descended into hell"*. This proclamation is not in any of the other creeds we regularly confess, the Nicene, Athanasian as well as the Old Roman Symbol, and it begs the question. If Jesus did indeed descend into hell, why did He do it? If you look in Luther's Small Catechism nothing at all is said about this in the "What Does This Mean" answer to the 2nd Article of the Apostle's Creed. Luther did preach on this topic in a sermon delivered in 1533 in the castle at Torgau, and from that sermon there is an explanation given in the Formula of Concord (dated 1577) which is contained in our Book of Concord; the Lutheran Confessions. Based on the passage above, 1 Peter 3:19, Luther makes this statement, *"We simply believe that the entire person [of Christ], God and man, after the burial descended into hell, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of hell, and took from the devil all his might."* At some point, after His death and burial and before the stone was rolled away from the tomb revealing His resurrection, the risen again Christ descended into hell to proclaim His victory over sin, death and the devil and all the devils angels/demons. I would put it this way. On Good Friday, as the Son of God is crucified, suffers, and dies the forces of evil, first and foremost Satan our enemy, proclaimed victory. The devil and his kingdom believed they had won the eternal war for the eternal destiny of all people by enticing the creation, mankind, to kill its Creator; Jesus the Son of God...true God Himself. That would mean an eternity of damnation for all of us. The party in hell must have been raucous. But then the Lord shows up, descends into hell, and He is most certainly alive in both His divinity and humanity. He proves in His resurrection that the forces of evil haven't won the war...no...they have lost it completely and forever. Christ proclaims His victory and then gives the victory to us so that we too have triumphed over sin, death, and the devil. They no longer hold any power over us. We're free of them forever. But this is what God always does. He takes the plans and schemes of the devil, of all evil, and works to redeem them for His purposes. We see it happen over and over again in the pages of Scripture. We're seeing it happen again right before our eyes today...our virtual "e-eyes". Last week I mentioned that the number of views for our Easter Worship service on Facebook was approaching 400, and with many of the views being more than one person the total number that heard the Good News of the resurrection was far more than that. Those views have now gone well beyond 400 and as of this morning the views for this past Sunday's service are also approaching 400 again. Putting that into a little perspective, at the height of "The Season" our average Sunday worship service is about 175. That means that more than two, and perhaps three times as many people are being reached through our proclamation of the cross and the empty tomb! We have people logging in from all over North America and perhaps even other parts of the world. Other churches that I know of are experiencing the same thing. I know of a few friends and acquaintances who take in two or three online services on a Sunday, hearing more of that Gospel and in greater depth and diversity through the Holy Spirit. In this Covid-19 pandemic the forces of evil, Satan and his minions, thought that they could shut down the Church of Jesus, put a stop to the proclamation of His death and resurrection for our salvation by eliminating Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Well, "Whaddaya know?" God did it again by taking our all but closed churches and virtually delivering them into 100s of millions, maybe billions of homes around the world. Jesus tells Peter and the rest of His disciples that "the gates of hell will never overcome His Church". (Matthew 16:18) Try as he might, and he certainly continues to, the defeated and condemned devil can never succeed in taking the Church down with him into his eternal punishment. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia! And this risen Christ gives to us the spoils of that victory, a life of peace with God that will last forever, which allows us to live out this life in this broken world in peace.

Pastor Brian