

051224 "To be a Witness to the Resurrection of Jesus" Acts 1:21-26

1.His Mother Is the Light of His Life

A little boy forgot his lines in a Sunday school presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it did not help. Her son's memory was blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, "I am the light of the world." the child beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world."

Today is Mother's Day. In the early 2000s, 'mother' was the most beautiful word in the English language, according to a survey of 40,000 people worldwide: Mother, Passion, Smile, Love, and Eternity are the top 5 words. Please don't ask me why the word 'father' is NOT in the top five.

For some, this day is a time for family gatherings, dinners together, sharing stories and laughter, but it is not a universal celebration for everyone. For those grieving the loss of their mother or child, or for families separated by conflict, Mother's day can be difficult. Feeling that loss and sorrow while others might be celebrating is okay. May the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you and give you peace that the world cannot give.

2.Here is the beginning of the 66 books of the Bible that we read as the Word of God: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Christian faith begins with believing this statement, that God created the heavens and the earth. When we say the Apostles' Creed, we join with millions of Christians through the ages in an understanding of God. It begins, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." If you truly believe that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth, you must also believe that there is nothing God does not know about His creation.

David sang of God in Psalm 139:1-4, "You know me, O LORD, for you have searched me; You know my sitting and my rising, and you make known my thoughts from afar; You have examined all my ways and my lying down, and you are familiar with all my deeds; There is nothing, O LORD, that you do not know the words of my tongue."

For David, God was the one who knew his every move, who knew his every thought, who knew the words that had not passed his lips and tongue, even the words that were in his heart, because for David, God was the one who had created him: "You formed my inward parts; you formed me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13). So it was only natural for David to know that God knew his every thought. Importantly, David's recognition and gratitude that God knew him better than he knew himself led him to mature into a person of true faith, not fearing or avoiding any given situation, but rather embracing and overcoming it with faith.

In the Book of Acts chapter 1, it's significant that the first name that the 120 or so people who gathered in Mark's upper room to pray together called God was "Lord, you know everyone's heart." But we don't. God knows your joys and sorrows, your good and bad, your beginning and end. God knows you. God understands you. Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul. Let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove will descend upon your life and make you whole.

3. Looking at Chapter 1 of Acts given to us today, Peter, ever willing to be the spokesman, suggests a replacement for Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. Qualifications are stated and two men are nominated: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. The group prays that God will look into the men's hearts and reveal which He has already chosen. The lot falls on Matthias, and the Twelve are twelve again.

The great thing the apostles were to attest to the world, was, Christ's

resurrection. Peter said in verse 22, "one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." As you may know, the word Christian began to be used later, and in the early church the expression "a witness of Jesus' resurrection" was constantly used as their identity. For that was the great proof of his being the Messiah, and the foundation of our hope in him.

In verse 25, it describes being an apostle as taking the place in this ministry. If you look at the original Greek Bible, the word *diakonia* is used, which means "service". Today, being a leader is often interpreted to mean having a vested interest or power, but the biblical principle should be the opposite. Serving, serving more than others, is the life of a true disciple. The rest of the disciples were the ones who went to a place of service, not to a place of power, in contrast to Judas Iscariot who went to his own place. That is the concrete life that bears witness to the resurrection of the Lord. When a human being is freed from self-attachment and desire and redirects his or her life away from self and toward service to God and service to others, that is evidence that the life of the risen Lord is overflowing in that place.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, God not only created you, but also made you God's children through Jesus, and is still calling you and me to a place of service. O come and sing this song with gladness as your hearts are filled with joy. Lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name. O give him all your tears and sadness; give him all your years of pain, and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.