

Disciples Affirm Resurrection Hope

Part 9 of Sermon Series:

What Disciples Do

a sermon based on

Ephesians 1:11-23

and delivered on

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Let me tell you about Susan (not my wife, Susan, another Susan). Susan was in the hospital and death was near. Her sister was on her phone talking to someone else in the family, when she whispered, “You better come soon. She might not last much longer.” Well, sis didn’t whisper quietly enough. Susan heard; and she spoke up, “I’m not ready to go yet.” Now, everyone in the room is feeling a little uncomfortable. Whether it was because they didn’t want Susan to hear that news, or because she wasn’t accepting the inevitable, I don’t know. So, they tried to change the subject. It didn’t work.

Susan piped up – a little bit louder, “I’m not ready to go yet!” Then, she sat up and bed, turned to the hospital chaplain and said, “Let’s dance. How about Patsy Cline’s ‘Crazy’?” The chaplain left the room and managed to find a Patsy Cline CD. When he came back to the room, Susan ordered everyone to push back the furniture. Even though her body was frail and fading, she stood with resolve, put her right hand on the chaplain’s shoulder and her left hand in to his, and they danced 🎵🎵 “Crazy, I’m feeling crazy for feeling so lonely. I’m crazy, crazy for feelin’ so blue. I knew you’d love me as long as you wanted...”¹ The family was flummoxed. Then, they each found a partner and joined the dance.

When the dancing finished, Susan got back into bed. A few days later, she died. I guess that means that she was ready.

At her funeral her family laughed – and they cried – as they remembered the dance and reflected on how it was the exemplification of her love for life.²

We are a resurrection people. Death has no power over anyone who claims that hope made real in Jesus Christ. In Jesus – in his resurrection – we receive a promise (an inheritance, as that passage from Ephesians says) that we are children of the eternal God and that through our redemption and his glory eternal life belongs to us. That’s good news. That’s good news – not as some think of it merely as a better life after we finally escape our lives here.

As those who affirm the resurrection hope, that assurance of eternal life frees us for life now. It frees us because as it says in Romans 8:38-39 there is nothing “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Patsy Cline was crazy for thinking her lover wouldn’t find another – crazy for thinking that she could count on him: lonely and blue as a result.

But nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Think about that. Free from worry about his devotion to us, we’re free to live. Free to seize the joyful moments of life. Free to take on dangers and challenges trusting that even in death, life continues. The resurrection hope frees us to take on evil. The resurrection hope frees us to foolishly spread our joy.

What is it about those whom we remember today that gives us hope – except the love that we received? We grieve. At times we cry. We ache. We long, and sometimes feel lonely and blue. But, we’ve not been abandoned! Instead the hope we claim as a resurrection people is that Christ in Jesus Christ we have received an inheritance in which we are destined to live – not freed from our bodies and earthly woes – but freed to live fully in this life so that as Scripture says, “When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ ... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection hope invites us to make the most of life, trusting that whatever challenges, whatever pain we encounter that those little victories are signs of his abiding love. Those moments that we long for from those who have died - those moments of joy, of song, of play, of

¹ Patsy Cline. Crazy by Willie Nelson. UMG (on behalf of Turntable Recordings LTD) 1961.

² Amy K. Butler, *A Preacher’s Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series: Thematic Plans for Years A, B, and C* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016) 248-249.

gastronomical delight – those moments of love are victories of life – victories that win over death.

Today, as we approach the communion table – we do so as we always do – in the company of the saints – those who've gone before, those among us, and those yet to come – we do so claiming that as we receive the gift of Jesus Christ – his body and life giving blood through elements of bread and wine – that we and they are affirming the resurrection hope of life – and the freedom to live it fully. AMEN.