

## **Easter 2011 Talk at Cherry Street Worship**

Rev. Dr. Donald W. Hackett April 24, 2010 at 9:16a.m.

Text: Philippians 2 First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA

### *Introduction – Bearers of the Light*

**Welcome to Easter 2010! Jesus is the light of the world.** For almost 2,000 years the people of God have been celebrating the hope, life, and love we can experience in the person of Jesus Christ. The celebration of Jesus that light continues!

- Every Sunday is a declaration of the reality that God has defeated death through his Son, Jesus.
- We believe that God is seeking to rescue, embrace, restore, and transform every child, woman, and man into his global and eternal family.

**If you are a follower of Jesus Christ**, welcome to the celebration! If you are still searching, looking to be found, yearning to be loved, you have come to the right place! Jesus is here to meet you today.

### *Background*

**After Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and came back from the dead**, he was not the same. His body was transformed into body that would not die again. It was immortal, made to last beyond time. In this resurrected body, Jesus encountered Mary Magdalene who was looking for his old body. Jesus said her name and she recognized him as her Lord. Jesus said to her: *“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”*

So Mary ran back to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive!

**After Jesus spoke to Mary outside the tomb, he left to join his Father.**

Now, Jesus could have stayed with the Father. His work was done. He had paid the debt that kept all people in sin’s bondage. He conquered death. All who would trust him, follow him, and allow his love to forgive and cleanse them would be free. In Christ they would live now and forever. Jesus work on earth was done. He needed to get Heaven ready for us. *Or was his work on Earth really complete?* Later that day in John 20, Jesus returns and appears to the disciples locked in fear in an upper room. His work on earth was not done.

### *The Continuing Work of Jesus*

**Jesus stayed with his disciples for 40 days.** He appeared to them at different times to teach them and encourage them in the work they were to yet do. At the end of this time, Jesus ascended back to the Father. He left his disciples his Holy Spirit to continue the work of giving light, hope, love, and life to a dark world. The

disciples and others took this good news, this light of Christ, to various parts of the First Century known world. Small communities of Jesus' followers began to spring up in towns and cities of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. As they grew and spread, they came under fierce persecution.

### *The Church of Philippi*

**One such faith community was in Philippi**, a coastal town in modern day Greece or Macedonia. Their light had been bright. They had been very generous in supporting Paul in his ongoing mission work. It seems that hard times were bearing down on this church. Their light was in danger of going out. In this letter, Paul is encouraging this congregation who had been such an encouragement to him. Let us hear Paul's word to the Philippians on how they and we can continue to be bearers of the light of Christ.

### *The Text – Philippians 2:1-16*

***1-4*** ***If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.***

- Christ is the source of the most important things in our lives.
- The key to our future in Christ is our unity.
- Unity comes as we focus on helping others.

***5-8*** ***Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.***

- Jesus was a man on a mission. His eyes were not on himself, but his task.
- Jesus decreased so we could increase (parenting or serving a parent).
- There is not new life without a necessary death.

***9-11*** ***Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even***

*those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.*

- Jesus is the one we worship and serve. We are a Christ-centered people.
- As Christians gather, we focus on Jesus and his Kingdom.

*<sup>12-13</sup>What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.*

- Responsively Obedient.
- Allowing God's Holy Spirit to fuel and work in and for us.

*<sup>14-16</sup>Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You'll be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing.*

- We are the light people are looking for.
- As we love and serve, people see God!

**What a wonderful and deeply rich passage this is!** Paul reminds us of all we have in Jesus Christ and then encourages to us live fully the life that is ours in Christ. We are Easter people and we allow, we invite the resurrection power of Jesus to express himself in and through us each day. How does all this take place for you and me?

### *1. Light the light*

**We receive the light.** Jesus came to give us the light of life. Matthew 4:16 announced that “the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” Jesus himself declared in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” To become a follower of Jesus we invite this light to shine in our lives. We ask Jesus to forgive us and commit ourselves to follow Him. We allow God to show us where there is darkness in our lives....in our thinking, our relationships, our daily habits and actions.

**Every day we allow the Light of God** to penetrate deeper and deeper into our lives to heal and transform us. I invite you today to receive the light again or maybe for the first time. Pray in your heart, “Jesus, come into my life. I want to trust you more and more.”

### *2. Feed the light*

**We grow in the love God that pours into our lives. We put ourselves in places to receive that love and wisdom.** We study, reflect, and apply the teachings of Jesus to our lives. We daily call on his Spirit to cleanse, lead, and empower us to be and do godly. We join with others of faith to worship, pray, learn, support, and serve a hurting world.

### *3. Spread the light*

**We pass on the hope.** We are a people on a mission. Our purpose is to bring light, love, and hope to others. Like Jesus, we are to leave the safe and known and go to where the needs are calling us.

**Romans 10:9-10** If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.