

Nokesville UMC Sunday Worship (Easter)

April 4, 2021

Rev. YoungMin Kim

“Don’t be stuck!”

Acts 10:37-43

(1)

Happy Easter! Today is the day that our Lord Jesus Christ overcame the power of death and was resurrected. Today is the day for us and for all believers to praise the Lord and celebrate our Risen Christ. I remember last year that due to the outbreak of the pandemic, we had to celebrate Jesus’s resurrection and enjoy Easter each in our own place and each in our own way. But I am very happy to have you here in the virtual and online sanctuary, worship God together, and celebrate Easter (and enjoy an Easter egg hunt for children, too).

We have prepared for Easter starting in the season of Lent. We had the Ash Wednesday Service imposing ashes on our foreheads. The ashes on our foreheads were reminiscent of our sinfulness before God and our human mortality. We also had our Lenten devotion with the guidebook, “The Path of Jesus: 40 Days of Spiritual Journey.” Every day, ten to twenty-five people joined my devotional video and followed Jesus’s footsteps from His birth to His resurrection. We also resumed and finished the sermon series with the movie “Silence,” which was suspended last year due to the pandemic. Through the movie, we had time to think of God’s silence in the midst of our suffering. And we had a Good Friday Service and meditated on Jesus’s seven last words on the cross through Haydn’s beautiful piece of music, “The Last Seven Words of Our Savior on the Cross.” All our work with the Ash Wednesday service, the Lenten devotion, and the sermon series was for today. Accumulating all our efforts, we will come to experience a more joyful and meaningful Easter Sunday. I deeply appreciate all of you who have shown great efforts to preserve the season of Lent with me and with each other during the past six and a half weeks.

(2)

According to the Lectionary schedule, we read Acts 10:37-43. In order to understand today’s passage, we need to examine the first part of chapter 10. There was a man named Cornelius. He was a centurion of the Roman Empire Cohort. But most of all, the author of Acts described him as a devout man who feared God with all his household and who gave generously to those in need among the Jewish people and prayed to God constantly. But he did not know about Jesus yet. One day, he had a vision that an angel of the Lord came and said to him, “Cornelius, your prayers and your compassionate acts are like a memorial offering to God. Send messengers to Joppa at once and summon a certain Simon, the one known as Peter” (v. 4-5). When the messenger came to Peter and called him, the angel of the Lord also appeared to Peter, relieved his anxiety, and ordered Peter to go with him without hesitation. Finally, the Centurion Cornelius and the Apostle Peter met together. Peter began to speak everything about Jesus. That is part of today’s passage.

Peter told Cornelius how Jesus was baptized with water by John the Baptist; how the Holy Spirit descended upon Him; how Jesus started His ministry as the Son of God; how Jesus healed the sick, drove out evil spirits, fed the hungry, and befriended the isolated and excluded. What is more, Peter described how Jesus was arrested, persecuted, and crucified. As the Roman centurion, Cornelius must have known the pain and cruelty of the crucifixion. And Peter added how God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day; and how Jesus appeared to His followers. While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius. And then, he was baptized by Peter and became a Christian.

(3)

The Centurion Cornelius is one of the key figures in the New Testament because he was the first Gentile Christian, a Roman Christian. Think about it! He was a Roman centurion, which means he had military power in the Roman Empire. Yet, he who had the power decided to become a Christian. He must have made a dangerous decision. Roman Emperors and Roman authorities did not welcome Christians. Rather, they arrested, tortured, and killed them. Thus, he could lose everything for a such reason. What was worse, he could be arrested, tortured, and killed like other Christians.

In some ways, Cornelius stood between being a Roman and a man of God. As a Roman centurion, he exerted his military influence; on the other hand, he feared God and helped Jewish people in need. He must have felt stuck. But after he met Peter and heard of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit fell upon him, and he decided to be a Christian, a Jesus-follower.

(4)

No one denies that the climax of the season of Lent is Good Friday, the day Jesus suffered and was crucified on the cross. And today, we celebrate Easter, the day Jesus was resurrected. But we should remember that between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, there is Holy Saturday. Holy Saturday is the day that everyone was still overwhelmed by the death of Jesus Christ. It is a day of remorse. It is a day of deep regret for the past. It is a day that Jesus's followers gave up faith and hope. For Jesus's followers, it was a day without a past or future, just stuck. However, Jesus overcame death and was resurrected. His tom—symbolizing sadness, despair, and hopelessness—became proof of Jesus's resurrection and gave His disciples and followers new hope and new joy.

Do not remain in Holy Saturday. Between Good Friday and Easter, between the past and the future, between remorse, regret, failure, and happiness, comfort, hope, DON'T BE STUCK. We believers are those who believe that Jesus conquered the power of death and was resurrected. He conquered remorse, regret, grief, darkness, and failure and brought joy, happiness, hope, and light. Thus, remain in Easter. Be a man and woman of Easter. Lead your life to the light of Easter and its happiness, hope, peace, and joy. Not just for one day a year, but seven days a week and throughout your lives, you Easter people.