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SERMON TITLE: **Christus Victor: Jesus Wins!**

SCRIPTURE: Mark 16:1-8

DATE: April 4, 2021

View online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Proverbs 8:22-36.

Mark was Peter's very close friend. Mark and Peter were so close, that Peter referred to Mark as his son (1 Peter 5:13). Mark was very young. It is said that he was the son of the woman who opened her home to Jesus and his disciples on the last night when they ate the Passover.

Mark must have followed the disciples and Jesus out to the garden of Gethsemane that evening. Later, when the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to arrest Jesus and a riot was about to break out, Mark was reportedly the one who fled naked.

All of the disciples fled that night, even though earlier they had been adamant that they would go with him to the death.

Even though the disciples had referred to Jesus as "the Christ," no one really understood exactly what that meant before Jesus was resurrected. Even then they were doubtful and afraid.

In the book of Mark, Jesus had told them this:

"The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31).

But they didn't get it.

Nobody was expecting a resurrection. They had even seen Jesus raise Lazarus and they still did not get it. You would think that someone might say, "Hey it's the third day—you think we should go check?" But that thought never crossed their minds.

They were no different than we are today!

Now three women decided to go, but they were going to anoint a dead body. Hear the story:

See what I mean?

But, in their defense, what an incredible outcome to such a horrible event! Even if somebody, even if Jesus himself had said it was going to happen, it's an unimaginable good news happy ending!

- The stone was rolled away—no little stone!
- The tomb was empty—no dead body!
- An angel was there to tell of it!

Jesus wins!

They were cowardly, fearful, and doubting. But Jesus was filled with peace and joy. He had come to do his Father's will and now on Easter Sunday, he walked out victorious!

When we talk about the will of God does it bring mixed emotions to you? We know that—or we have heard things like *submit to God's will, or if it is God's will*. I am not sure we think this is necessarily going to have a good outcome!

Sometimes it even seems to be an "out" for God, as if God is not powerful enough to accomplish what we ask for. But today I would like to look at God's will in this case.

The Bible tells us that all of us don't wake up in the morning and seek God in our natural human state. That might be the understatement of the century. We pretty much seek our own will because we are not capable of giving ourselves fully to God. There are two things at work here:

1. We live largely by our own desires. We have goals and ambitions and loves in which we have hopes of making a good life for ourselves. But in and of ourselves, those things are not big enough to feed our soul. It may feel right for a time, but life lived for the gusto of this life fades. When loss comes—whether it's a job or our health or our marriage or our possessions—we become shaken, disoriented, and directionless because our desires are not good guides for the long haul.
2. We have an enemy in this world. Martin Luther said in his famous hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" that there's a flood of mortal ills; that we have a foe that seeks to work us woe; that his craft and power are great; that he is armed with cruel hate; and that the world is filled with devils that threaten to undo us. He calls this enemy the prince of Darkness.

None of this is new. The Bible speaks of it beginning in Chapter 3 of Genesis. That's pretty early. Yet I think that you probably have come into contact with these two challenging conflicts in life fairly early—

Perhaps you describe it as a longing, that you have been unable to fill, and obstacles that seem like darkness—Luther's proverbial evil foe.

God feels it too. In fact, the whole creation feels it. Paul writes:

"The creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:21-22).

God set about a plan to redeem God's world.

To redeem is to convert something to something else. When I was a kid we used to save S & H Green Stamps. Now that's going back a long time! But you got a book, and with each purchase no matter where you shopped you collected stamps, and when your book was full, you could redeem them for products in the catalogue. It was like online shopping. And you thought online catalogue shopping was new!

God wants to do two things:

1. Put God's Spirit within you to ground you in the things that matter and give you eternal life.
2. Conquer and defeat Satan.

God did both of these through Christ. In Christ, God said, "I want you back! I want you freed."

Once in a prophecy at the birth of his son, John the Baptist, Zechariah said,

"Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us" (Luke 1:68-71).

Not only that, but this world is going to be redeemed. That is what is in store for us through resurrection.

It does not just occur through the death of Christ. But Christ had to go through death to redeem it.

Do you appreciate the LOVE expressed for you? (Think of the disciples and women who were so filled with fear that they didn't even look for him.)

When Jesus suffered, that means God suffered. We don't really understand "God in three persons" like we recite in The Apostles' Creed –

God the Father Almighty
Jesus Christ his only Son
The Holy Spirit, the giver of new life

But they are One in purpose and that purpose is redemption.

Suffering is not meaningless or senseless. Jesus' suffering led to something colossally meaningful, and so when we suffer, Jesus can bring the same kind of meaning from it. While Jesus felt the abandonment of God while on the cross, God did not abandon Jesus but brought him through to resurrection. So we will never be abandoned by God, if we seek God. Thirdly, had Jesus not been resurrected, we would have no resurrection. But He is Risen!

So how is your faith? Is there room for it in your life? Do you want to stand victorious in suffering like Jesus?

In addition, in Colossians Paul writes:

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it

to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross (2:13-15).

God's goals were accomplished through Christ. He is Christus Victor—Jesus wins! He is risen!

Paul admonishes us:

"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6-7).

The devil, the forces of evil have no power over us to rob us of life and freedom!

It took the disciples a while to really see Jesus, it is a process. But as they did, and as they lived in him, let him fill them with his desires that fed their souls, they transformed not only themselves but the whole world.

CHRIST IS RISEN! Jesus wins! For love of you and me.

AMEN