

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

April 9, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Jeremiah 31: 1-6

Responsive Reading; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

Epistle Reading; Acts 10: 34-43

Gospel Reading; John 20: 1-18

Sermon Title: **Run Don't Walk**

By Rev. Jim Garner

Summary; Not only should we run to receive the news; we should run to proclaim the news.

I got to tell you something. I got to tell you something.

These words were the excited proclamation of a young boy who was like a grandson to me. Every time he saw me when he was a child, he had some great news that he wanted me to hear. His father advised me to drop everything and listen as it would save time. Paul said that his son Marc had only one

version of his stories and that was the long version. Also, if interrupted he would always start over from the beginning.

Consequently, to save time you let him tell his story and then he would go back to play or more often sit quietly and listen to every word his heroes had to say. This five-year-old was not only a good story teller he was a super listener.

At that time I was an over-the-road truck driver that primarily pulled oversized loads, large machines and/or equipment. I would take pictures of all the loads I hauled and give them to him for a special scrapbook along with an explanation of what they were

According to his father, whenever someone came to visit, they got the tour of the scrapbook with a word for word description, or sometimes an enhanced version, of what they were all about. His excitement was infectious and proclamation was totally unforgettable.

Jesus recognized this quality in children when He said in Mark, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

When God gives us news, especially the most important news in the history of humankind, He wants us to get excited about it.

The title of my message today is Run Don't Walk and it is taken from a casual reference in our Gospel Scripture for today. John 20: 2-4 says, "Then she (Mary) RAN and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.' Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So, they both RAN together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first."

You all know the story and the context of it. This was Sunday, the day after the Sabbath. Two and a half days ago the family and friends of Jesus, had seen their friend and their hope horribly murdered on a Roman cross. As far as they could see all their hopes and dreams had ben forever shattered on that hill of the skull. It was over, done, finished. All they had to look forward to was being rounded up by the authorities and murdered for their association with Jesus.

Not a good place to be!

And now, to add insult to injury, they could not properly show respect to that tattered body of the one they loved so much.

How could they find any hope in the words of Jeremiah, “Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt...You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.” Or, the words of the Psalm for-telling when God would, “Open the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter.”

Yeah, right, that ain’t gonna happen.

Spoiler alert! It would happen and it did happen, and it even happened to a greater extent than anyone could comprehend.

In Acts we see how the eyes of Peter were opened when he said, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all!”

The Jews thought that the Messiah would be limited to saving just that small, out of the way, community of the descendants of Abraham. But no. That was not God’s plan. God chose the Hebrew race to nurture His word until the time was right. “And when the time was right God sent His son to save the whole world. (Or as Peter put it) “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”

Are you catching this? On Friday a relatively small group of believers was doomed to death and a life that was worse than death. Then on the third day the entire world was offered to live life and to live it abundantly. On top of that anyone who would believe on the name of Jesus Christ was invited to share with Jesus as an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Hey! You just won the biggest lottery of all times.

Run, don't walk to claim your prize and while you are at it, like a little child proclaim the glory of God saying, "I gotta tell you something!" Brag on Jesus and Jesus will brag on you!

Because of this day the Kingdom of God can be your new address. Don't forget to get a Change of Address form from the Post Office. Hallelujah and Amen!