

EASTER SUNDAY March 27, 2016

Gaines Congregational UCC

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 65: 17-25

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

Epistle Reading: Acts 10: 34-43

Gospel Reading: John 20: 1-23

Sermon Title: HE IS ALIVE

by Rev. Jim Gardner

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

He is alive. He is alive. My sins are all forgiven and the doors are open wide. He is alive. Hallelujah sweet Jesus, He is alive.

This is it. This is why we are all here. This is why there are millions and millions of Christians around the world worshipping today.

There are only two reasons we are Christians today. Number 1 is Good Friday and number 2 is Easter. Number one is God made a promise and number 2 is God kept his promise. God promised that Jesus would die on a cross and rise from the

dead on the 3rd day and VOILA it happened; He is alive. He is alive. All our sins are forgiven and the door is open wide. He is alive. He is alive. Sweet Jesus he is alive.

Have you ever seen that commercial for Gold? The actor says that the world is in chaos and that only gold is a stable that can be relied on. Then he says, "What is in your safe?"

To this I answer, "Nothing, I do not even have a safe."

I don't have a safe but I have a clay pot, and in that clay pot I have a treasure that is more valuable than all the gold in the world. That treasure was given to me on that 1st Easter when God made his son directly available to every human on Earth and every human yet to be born.

Yes, that includes me, and yes that includes you.

In our Epistle lesson from Acts, Peter says that Jesus appeared to the deciples, ate with them and commanded them, "to preach to all the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

He is alive. He is alive. All of our sins are forgiven and the door is open wide. He is alive, sweet Jesus, He is alive!

This Easter story is not a story of a wonderful thing that happened to the women in Jesus' life, or to the disciples, or

even to a hurting Peter. Oops that did not sound right. Quick, fast forward. Oh yes this was a wonderful miracle that changed their lives but it was a lot more. This miracle changed everything for everyone living and yet to live.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."

We are the clay jars, or clay pots. Our mortal bodies that will die and rot, dust to dust and ashes to ashes that God chose to hold the immeasurable treasure of his son and his plan for his son to be proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through us. This is crazy, God does not entrust his sons proclamation to a fire proof safe or a sin proof angel, He entrusts this miracle to a bunch of clay pots that mean nothing in and of themselves but everything when filled with the treasure of Jesus Christ.

When the song says He is alive it does not mean that, "He was alive, He died, He lived again, and then He disappeared into the Heavens on Pentecost never to be heard from again."

It means that he is alive now, today, here, just as available to us as he was to Peter when he lifted him to his feet and the love of God poured from his eyes totally consuming and freeing Peter.

He is Alive. He is Alive. Our sins are ALL forgiven and the doors of heaven are open wide. He is Alive, sweet Jesus He is alive.

The Jews celebrate the deliverance from bondage, the miracles, the parting of the Red Sea. They say, "See how great our God was. He did all of this for us and someday he will send his Messiah to save us once and for all."

Thanks to Easter we Christians know that we do not have to wait for the Messiah because he is right here, with us and in us. When we pass the peace we pass the touch of Jesus to others who also pass the touch of Jesus to us.

We are the clay jars and Jesus is the treasure inside us. "Those who believe in the name of Jesus Christ have the power to be the sons and daughters of God Almighty and the brothers and sisters of Jesus the Christ, our brother, our savior and our friend."

He is Alive. He is Alive. Hallelujah and Amen he is Alive!