

**“Living Among The Dead”  
Rev. Steve McCoy  
April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Easter Sunday  
First United Methodist Church,  
Marquette, MI**

On this day of all days, we acknowledge something special. We acknowledge in some way the person of Jesus. Today, the church's will be packed, we have even added this service to provide another alternative for those who come to worship on this day. Whether they know it or not many people will come seeking something. Most will say they came because they always go to church with Mom or Grandpa on Easter Day. But deep down we are all seeking something greater than ourselves. The story of Easter, the story of the resurrection that gives new life to each of us is a powerful one, that draws and captivates our attention, if for but a short while. But most often we do as the disciples do, we come seeking the living among the dead. And as Paul writes if that is all we seek, then we are most to be pitied.

For Jesus is not here, he is risen. Yet this concept makes many of us feel uneasy.

John Irving's novel, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* captures this in these terms. "I find that Holy Week is draining; no matter how many times I have lived through his crucifixion, my anxiety about his resurrection is undiminished; I am terrified that, this year, it won't happen, that, that year, it didn't. Anyone can be sentimental about the nativity; any fool can feel like a Christian at Christmas. But Easter is the main event; if you don't believe in the resurrection, you're not a believer."?

In the greater sense, he is right; Easter is the main event. While many will pack the church's today, it still won't be as many as did on December 24<sup>th</sup>. The idea of the resurrection is a hard concept to get around. We want to be able to explain it away with all of its problems and inconsistencies. We want to take it word for word, we want

to try to understand the concept of Jesus resurrection among a world where people still hurt, where people still suffer, where people still die. Many come seeking, but others have stopped trying. What I have found is that the problem lies with us and not with them. It is not that they do not have enough faith, or enough understanding, or have just not given over enough control. But the church has taken away their Jesus to the point where he cannot be known to them in the same way that he is known by others. Since they cannot know this Jesus they choose not to know at all.

To illustrate this point, William Dennison writes of the story of a little girl, who listened in on a group of ladies who questioned pastor Williamson after services one Sunday morning. “When were you saved?” they asked him. In other words, when was his personal crises experience in coming to know Jesus Christ? Before Rev. Williamson could respond, the little girl standing beside them spurted out: “I

was saved 2000 years ago.”...Her confession demonstrates tremendous insight! The ladies viewed salvation as an individual and subjective crises experience, whereas the little girl already understood that her salvation was totally accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection, of Christ some 2000 years ago. In other words, salvation is not dependant upon what I do, but upon what Christ has done.?

This is the point that Paul is making in our scripture passage. The Resurrection is not about only this life, life today, our life, but the Resurrection is about LIFE! It is about all life that God who loves and cares for God’s people so much that God would offer Jesus with the assurance that his death, our death would not be the final answer, but instead it would be life. In the resurrection every enemy is being destroyed, and the final enemy to be conquered is death and in fact death has been conquered. We need not wait until that Easter day to come to the church hoping to hear about a nice dead man who can make us closer to God for every day

Christ is resurrected, and every day the Spirit renews and creates and recreates the world in God's own image. Today is just the reminder, that everyday is a gift from God, a free gift that is given to us, not because of what we do but because of who we are, God's children, God's own creation.

So for those who have come for that reminder, great! For those who have come seeking, I pray that you will hear that no more searching is necessary. None of us need to seek the living among the dead for today affirms that Christ is alive and his Spirit is among us. As John Wesley the founder of Methodism writes "to he that would say, Believe and ye shall be saved, I say nay, Ye are already saved, just believe."