

“Bring Out Your Dead”

This morning we have a special treat. Our youth are going to put on a skit for us. The setting is England around 932 A.D. where due to poor hygiene and the spread of plague rats people are dying right, left and center. People are dying by the thousands. In the midst of this dark time several unscrupulous people are attempting to get rid of their relations because... well... sometimes our relations can just get on our last nerve.

(Gavin and Sam come in with a wagon, a wooden spoon and a pot to start the skit.)

I would like to thank our youth this morning for entertaining us with this classic skit *from Monty Python and the Holy Grail* called, “Bring Out Your Dead.”¹ I would also like to thank the youth for helping me to make the point we all have things in our lives we wish would simply die and go away.

In this morning’s passage the Apostle Paul uses the terms death, dying and dead twelve times in eleven verses. At a time when pens, ink and paper were hard to come by it says something when a word or phrase is used over and over again. It says we should pay attention. Paul uses these words more than any other word in this passage. I think the reason Paul uses these words is because Paul is trying to make an ancient point from the his very spiritually young Christian audience. When it comes to turning to God there can be no turning back. Once we have turned away from our sins we are to turn away from them forever. We are not to put our sins on a shelf and think, “I’ll come back to you later.” We are meant to turn toward God and to leave our sins dead and buried in our past. Once we have turned toward Christ and set our course to follow God, we are to leave everything else behind. Turning away from the things which put distance between us and God is not like cleaning up a room or dusting off a shelf. We are not meant to orderly put our sins away. We are supposed to leave our sins which have been crucified with Christ buried in the ground. In the same way we wouldn’t dig up the body of a beloved aunt or a deceased family dog we need to stop holding on to the sins of our past.

Here is an example. In the days and months leading up to the Revolutionary War Thomas Jefferson made this observation. “The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.”² I believe the liberty of which Mr. Jefferson was speaking is the liberty to build a new world. The goal of the founding fathers was to build a nation where all people could be free to pursue life, liberty and happiness. As Americans we are builders. We build new things. However, to build something new means old things have to be torn down. I am not talking about cutting down trees for homes and businesses, or clearing fields for crops. The things which need to be torn down are old ideas about how people are meant to live together. There are certain ideas which need to and must die if we are to truly live free.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way. **“What shall we say then? Are we to continue to sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life”** (Rom 6:1-4).

Our forefathers fought and died to give us the freedoms we enjoy today; however, Christ died to save our souls first. Christ came that we might have more abundant life yesterday, today and in the hereafter. And yet many of us are still dragging ourselves through life with the chains of sin and death. This passage challenges us

¹ Monty Python, “The Holy Grail.” Bring Out Your Dead, EMI Films. 3 April 1975 (UK), 27 April 1975 (US). Film.

² “The Essential Wisdom of the Founding Fathers.” Edited by Carol Kelly-Gangi. (Fall River Press: New York) 13.

to pull out of the dark places the sins we have so neatly put away, and hidden. Today is the time to claim our freedom. Today is the day to confess our sins before God. Confession is about admitting our guilt. Confession is about claiming our mistakes and asking for forgiveness without excuses. Confession is about putting a stop to the blame game. Confession is about telling the truth about our dark places. If we truly want to enjoy a better life then today is a good day. Today is our opportunity to let freedom ring in our own lives by letting go of the chains that bind us, and slipping past the guards that would hold us. Today is the day to put God first by allowing God to kill all of those things in our lives which would keep us away from God. Jesus has already suffered a brutal death to drag all of our heavy chains of sin and guilt with Him to the grave. Jesus was raised from the dead so we could be raised as well – without those heavy chains. Today is the day to walk in the light of God’s love. Today is not the day to head back out to the cemetery to dig up our past mistakes, failures and sinful tendencies so we can be trapped by them again.

You know, in this country we have freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, protection against soldiers being stationed in our homes, protection from unlawful search and seizures; the right not to incriminate ourselves, the right to have a fair trial, the right to trial by a jury of our peers, and protection against cruel and unusual punishment. We have these rights and protections under the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution for a reason. The same can be said of our salvation in Christ. We have been freed from sin and death for a purpose. That purpose is to live into a new life, and to help build new world. What will this new world look like and on what will it be created? I can think of nothing better than the rock of Christ Jesus. However, to build on the rock of Christ we must become more like Christ. To be more like Christ means allowing the parts of ourselves which do not reflect Christ’s image to die.

To this point I like this quote by Thomas Jefferson,³

“I consider the doctrines of Jesus as delivered by himself to contain the outlines of the sublimest system of morality that has ever been taught but I hold in the most profound detestation and execration the corruptions of it which have been invented...”

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Henry Fry, June 17, 1804

Brothers and sisters if we are to do our part in building a new world on this continent we need to hold to the ideals of Christ. We have the freedom to worship in any way we choose and for too many that has led to not worshipping at all. **(pause)** If we want to see this nation become a fully devoted Christian nation then we have to become a fully devoted Christian people. There is nothing in our laws to prevent us from practicing our faith. Let’s use our freedom to practice our faith where others can see it. Let’s share Christ with the least and the lost and our brothers and cousins at the family picnic. Let’s celebrate the victory we have in Christ. Through our faith in Christ let’s allow freedom to ring.

^{3 3} “The Essential Wisdom of the Founding Fathers.” Edited by Carol Kelly-Gangi. (Fall River Press: New York) 77.