

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL
LESSONS FROM LAMENTATIONS
(Part 7)
RESURRECTION AND RESTORATION

The Lord is risen! Hallelujah.

Last Friday we were in grief at the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus. Yesterday we were in lamentations, with the reality of the death of Jesus really dawning on us, and we wondered what the future would bring. But today

We are astonished and astounded. There is news. The Lord Jesus has risen from the dead. The tomb is empty. Thoughts swirl in our minds. Our hearts are bursting with wonderment, with awe, with great joy.

Could anyone have imagined this outcome? Up to this time, despite the scriptures, despite Jesus' pronouncements, we "did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead." (Jn 20:9). But now the Lord is risen!

What a complete turnaround. From mourning to dancing.

Can we now ever doubt that God can turn our lives around? Can we ever despair in a seemingly hopeless situation? Can we ever again feel helpless, knowing that our loving God is our constant help?

Describing the resurrection event, and applying it in our own lives, Paul had this to say. "Behold, I tell you a mystery. we will all be changed, in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor 15:51-52).

I have experienced this mystery and blessing from God. Twenty years ago, in August of 1989, I was seriously ill. I was struck with meningococemia, a fatal illness. I was in a coma, given a 10% chance to live. This simply meant that I was not yet dead, but there was no hope. But on the third day the Lord raised me. I awoke from my coma, and I was well and completely healed.

Are you in a seemingly hopeless situation? Know that Jesus is alive. He is risen from the dead. God has wrought something wonderful, something totally mysterious. Jesus has moved from death to life.

We in CFC have also experienced our lamentations. The crisis and split were very painful. People were disillusioned and lost hope. But God restored CFC. The trumpets were sounded. CFC-FFL rose from almost certain disintegration to new life in the Spirit.

Easter Sunday is a powerful testament to the love, mercy and power of God. Easter Sunday is what gives us hope and great joy.

Here again is the reflection offered two years ago (from the book "Forty Days of Lamentations"). It still is, and always will be, relevant to our life in Christ.

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Easter Sunday

Turning our Mourning into Dancing

*“The Lord, my strength and might,
came to me as savior.”
(Psalm 118:14)*

April 8
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-23
Colossians 3:1-4
John 20:1-9

Hallelujah! The Lord is risen!

Peter and John see the empty tomb (Jn 20:1-9). Something extraordinary has happened. Jesus has risen from the dead! Jesus is alive!

Jesus’ human life had ended with his death on the cross. The hopes and dreams of those who looked to him as a political king had been dashed. The disciples had been scattered and were uncertain of the future. Some of those who crucified Jesus were beginning to doubt if they did the right thing. There was uncertainty, disappointment, apprehension and lamentation.

But suddenly, things had decisively changed. Jesus had risen from the dead! He was alive! That turned everything topsy-turvy. **Death had turned to life. Darkness had turned to light. Despair had turned to hope. Sorrow had turned to joy. Mourning had turned to dancing. Defeat had turned to victory.** And we who were dead to sin were now “raised with Christ” (Col 3:1). It was a new beginning.

If Jesus’ resurrection turned everything around, and if we are raised with him, then our lives also now need to be completely turned around. That means that from now on, “if then (we) were raised with Christ,” we must “seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.” (Col 3:1-2). Our focus from now on must be totally on the Lord. All our striving in this life will be guided by God’s ways. All our works will be determined by His will. And our sole desire would be to live in a way that is pleasing to Him, so that “when Christ (our) life appears, then (we) too will appear with him in glory.” (Col 3:4). One day, we will live with Christ forever in the presence of God.

But God’s will includes our work in the world in the present. What is that work? It is the Great Commission, the divine order Jesus gives to all Christians. “He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.” (Acts 10:42). We are to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus to the whole world. Such proclamation gives everyone the opportunity to repent and turn to faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is crucial to the life of the world, as “everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts

10:43). In Jesus we are saved. In Jesus we are restored to God. In Jesus we have our hope of eternal life.

Wow! What a God! What great love for us! What is our appropriate response?

Our hearts should be overflowing with gratitude. “Give thanks to the Lord, who is good, whose love endures forever.” (Ps 118:1).

We should never be afraid. “Let those who fear the Lord say, God’s love endures forever. The Lord is with me; I am not afraid; what can mortals do against me?” (Ps 118:4,6).

We should always be confident of God’s help. “In danger I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free.” (Ps 118:5).

We can always rely on God for help. “The Lord is with me as my helper” (Ps 118:7a).

We look to the Lord for victory even in the midst of great opposition (Ps 118:10-12).

God has saved us, restored us and blessed us. Awesome! “By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes.” (Ps 118:23).

Let us rejoice in God’s salvation. “I was hard pressed and falling, but the Lord came to my help. The Lord, my strength and might, came to me as savior. The joyful shout of deliverance is heard in the tents of the victors; I shall not die but live and declare the deeds of the Lord. The Lord chastised me harshly, but did not hand me over to death.” (Ps 118:13-15,17-18).

Jesus lives, and we live with him.

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Our 40 days of Lent are over. But the lessons of Lamentations continue.

Here is the Lamentations footnote, after the daily reflections during Lent, in the book “Forty Days of Lamentations.” I leave this as a final word to us even today.

Lamentations footnote:

Our period of Lamentations (over this season of Lent) has come to an end. And we now have a new beginning.

Continue to learn the lessons of Lamentations. Live out these lessons more and more fully in your lives. Keep returning to them, and allow them to continue to transform you. Know that the lessons of Lamentations are eternal. And the fruit of Lamentations will have eternal consequences—for you, for CFC, and for the world.

The Lord is risen indeed.
Happy Easter to all.

Easter Sunday
April 12, 2009