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Beverly ECC

“NEW LIFE”
First Corinthians 123b-13

□ On Good Friday, the old faith of Christ’s disciples collided with the cross and died. On Easter Sunday a new faith burst into life. John 20:19-23:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

What does this reveal about the new faith?

⊗ 1st, Resurrection Faith is experiential. Knowledge of the truth must be experienced to be fully grasped.

⊗ 2nd, Resurrection Faith is relational. It requires *vertical* relationship with Jesus and *horizontal* relationship with other disciples. Thomas is a case-in-point: he alone did not join the others Easter evening; he alone did not at first believe Christ had risen.

⊗ 3rd, Resurrection Faith advances the Kingdom. **“As the Father has sent me”** declares Jesus, **“I am sending you.”**

The Risen Lord is inviting us to live in his faith.

□ On Friday, the old hope of Christ’s disciples was shattered by his death. On Sunday a **new hope** was born. First Corinthians 15:20, 22-24, 58:

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But in this order: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.... Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Resurrection Hope is a powerful force in the life of Christ Followers!

⊗ 1st, It liberates us from the fear of death. Those who are filled with the life of Jesus need not fear annihilation, judgment, or hell.

⊗ 2nd, It energizes us to build for God’s kingdom.

Because of bodily resurrection going to heaven is not our ultimate hope: rather, it is to help fulfill the words we so often pray: {Mt 6:10} **“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”** Our living hope compels us to make disciples, help each other obey Jesus, work for justice and do acts of compassion, all for the Lord’s sake.

The Risen Lord is inviting us to live in his hope.

□ On Friday, the old love of Christ’s disciples was buried with him. On Sunday a new love sprang forth. John 21:15: **“When they had finished eating, Jesus**

said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, “you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’” And then He repeats it twice more, with minor variations.

Do you hear the implied, “if-then”? *If you love me, then feed my lambs. If you love me, then take care of my sheep. If you love me, then feed my sheep.*

✿ The really radical thing about Resurrection Love is that receiving God’s love in Christ obligates and equips us to return it to him and to share it with others. If we love Jesus, then we must love others.

The Risen Lord is inviting us to live in his love.

⇒ When I say He “is inviting us” I mean *us*: not only *individuals*, not just an *audience* (like people with similar tastes who end up at the same theater, but are otherwise unconnected), not an *aggregate* (like a group of strangers who happen to gather at a street corner while waiting for the light to change) – *us*, this collective, this assembly, this congregation (including those who will join us but are not yet here).

Our relationship with God in Christ (or lack thereof) is not a private matter.

It is *personal*. No one can decide for us. Each is accountable to choose for or against Jesus. Those who say “Yes” must individually grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Nevertheless, personal does not mean private. Individual does not mean independent.

“Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Co 13:13). Resurrection faith, hope, and love are the soul of discipleship, and they are fundamentally communal in nature. We do not: become conformed to the image of Jesus in seclusion; attain full health, strength and fruitfulness alone; experience the vertical relationship, advance God’s kingdom, or share his love best in isolation.

How can we know if BECC is really living the resurrection life? What are the signs that we are together sharing Resurrection Faith, Hope and Love?

□ Paul identifies three of the most crucial signs in First Corinthians 12:3-13 {p 1,170}. (The heading in some Bibles says *Spiritual Gifts*, but the implications go far beyond speaking in tongues.)

✦ Sign # 1 is absolute allegiance to Christ Jesus.

◆ V 3b ~ **“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord, [Κυριος],’ except by the Holy Spirit.”**

At first glance this is absurd. Even an ardent atheist is physically able to say, **“Jesus is Lord,”**

But as Paul wrote this, synagogues were expelling members who did not deny Jesus and Rome was starting to require its subjects to offer incense to the emperor while declaring, “Caesar is Κυριος.” Who else but dyed in the wool Christ Followers would risk shunning, arrest, and possible execution to proclaim, **“Jesus is Κυριος”?**

Absolute allegiance to Christ is one sign that the Church is living in his resurrection faith, hope and love.

✦ Sign # 2 is healthy diversity.

◆ V 4 ~ **“There are different kinds of gifts.”**

◆ V 5 ~ **“Different kinds of service”** (i.e., we have a variety of roles and ministries).

◆ V 6 ~ **“Different kinds of working”** (God uses diverse means to accomplish his purpose for the Church).

◆ In vv 8-10, Paul mentions several spiritual gifts: **“a message of wisdom,” “healing,”** and so forth.

It is God’s plan that we bring sundry roles, spiritual gifts, natural abilities, life experiences, passions, and personalities to the table. The Lord delights in our diversity.

Healthy diversity is another sign that the Church is living in Christ's resurrection faith, hope and love.

- ✦ Sign # 3 is steadfast unity.
- ♦ Vv 4-6 ~ **“Different gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them..... different service, but the same Lord... different working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”**
- ♦ V 7 ~ **“To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for”** what? **“The common good.”**
- ♦ Vv 11-13 ~ **“These are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. Just as the body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”**

Unity is a SATB choir harmoniously singing different parts of the same song.

Unity is a team of athletes effectively filling various positions as they follow a single game plan.

Unity is a well-coordinated crew of carpenters, plumbers and electricians utilizing their skills to construct the same building.

Unity is a group of office workers excelling at their unique tasks, and at the same time, contributing enthusiastically toward a common project.

Unity is us: going deep into Resurrection Faith, Hope and Love *together*; embodying the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 *together*; obeying the Great Commandment and fulfilling the Great Commission *together*; building for God's Kingdom *together*.

We will never accomplish this in our own strength. There are too many personal agendas, too many territorial

claims, too many clashing idiosyncrasies for us to overcome in our own strength.

God be praised, we do not have to. His Holy Spirit is well able to achieve his purpose in us. (What is more, He is already doing it!)

Absolute allegiance to Jesus, healthy diversity, and steadfast unity: these are vital signs that BECC is living in Christ's Resurrection Faith, Hope, and Love.

{Php 1:3-6} **“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you”** – in us! – **“will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”**