**Resurrection Roller Coaster 2016 03 27**

**Luke 24:1-12 Pr. H. Adachi**

May the joy of our risen Lord spring up in the hearts of the people in this sanctuary!

In Knott’s Berry Farm, there is a chapel called the “Church of Reflection”. Although no weekly services are held there now, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Buena Park originally started their weekly worship there 60 years ago.

Within a few years after they started, the church purchased a land nearby Knott’s, built a sanctuary, and moved their place of worship. However, just two weeks ago on March 13th, they worshipped at the Church of Reflection inside the theme park to celebrate their 60-year anniversary. The current pastor of the congregation, Pastor Michel Schneider, and Bishop Murray Finck presided and preached in that service.

When we reflect on what happens inside a theme park like Knott’s Berry Farm, it is similar to what happening in a church. For example, in both places you may get wet when baptized at a church and when they get on some of rides at Knott’s. In both places people are excited.

Like believers in the church who sometimes fear, lose hope, and want to leave the church, people on the roller coasters might feel tremendous fear and regret that they got on the roller coaster.

On this Easter Sunday, let’s reflect on how the first generation Christians felt when Jesus was crucified. A week before that, people in Jerusalem praised Jesus and welcomed him to the town. The 12 disciples and followers of Jesus, like Mother Mary, Mary of Magdalene, Martha, and others were probably excited.

At that time, the country of Israel was almost controlled by Romans, therefore, many people expected the new leader, Jesus, might be able to turnaround the situation between the Roman Empire and Israel. However there were Jewish leaders who wanted to kill Jesus.

In those complicated balance of power, the crowd’s expectation of Jesus was very high. However, Jesus appeared to be a weak man on the donkey, not like a king on a strong horse. Therefore, the crowd started doubt about him even though they saw or heard about Jesus’ miracles and his compassion for the people. Then one of the disciples betrayed Jesus, and Jesus was caught by Jewish leaders. They insisted to the Roman authority, the Pontius Pilate, that Jesus should be executed because he proclaimed that he himself was the savior.

Pilate did not see a reason for him to be executed, but the citizens in Jerusalem did not agree with what Pilate said. They shouted “Crucify him.” Not even Pontius Pilate could not stop the crucifixion.

Disciples and followers of Jesus could not stop the crucifixion either. The disciples ran away, fearing that they might also be crucified. After the crucifixion, they continued to fear, and also recognized their sinfulness and shame since they could not do anything to save Jesus from crucifixion. They were desperate, and wondered why they followed Jesus for the last three years.

After the Sabbath, Sunday morning, Mary and others went to see the body of Christ at the tomb in order to put perfumed oil. However the body was not there. Two angels appeared and told them about the resurrection of Jesus, and reminded them what Jesus was staying in Galilee. “Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

Jesus was still living. Also the words Jesus spoke were living. Even though Mary, the disciples, and others could not believe the resurrection right away, their despair gradually turned into hope.

While following Jesus, the first century Christians lost their hope in Christ completely. But it did not end there, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even now, 2000 years after Jesus was born into this world, we are reminded that his words are living, and the body of Jesus, the Church, is living also.

Even though Jesus spoke his words 2000 years ago, his words were remembered in the first Christian Century and recorded in the Bible later. And they are living in our hearts, too. For example, he said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus encourages us even today that we connect to the body of Christ, like branches connected to the tree to live.

The last book of the Bible is Revelation… Sometimes people interprets that this book describes the end of the world. Pastor Craig Koester, a professor and a theologian of Luther Seminary wrote a book titled “Revelation and the End of All Things”. However I think he challenged the people in the world to think if the Revelation, the last book of the Bible, really means the end of all things.

The professor describes the summary of Revelation using his simple drawing. This is the drawing. Our life in Jesus Christ is something like this; we may experience fearful steep downhill, but we are raised back. Then again we experience downhill but then we may go up again… Our lives are something similar to the roller coaster. But it is important not to get off the roller coaster.

When I think about the Resurrection Lutheran Church, we are experiencing changes… Especially as we try a new challenge for Japanese speaking group to join the English speaking worship twice or three times a month starting in May. You might feel it is like a roller coaster, but I am sure this is Resurrection Roller Coaster that runs the way that God prepared for us. We will eventually experience the true Joy of Resurrection according to His will.

