
I would like to invite you pray with me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us. Melt us, mold us, fill us, and use us. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us. Amen.

It is Super Bowl Sunday! The Big Game is on tonight...Seahawks vs. Patriots! Since my team is not playing today, my excitement is less than before...but still there is some excitement because there is a fellowship of people. People come together for this event like we come together in this morning to share life together.

Since we are here together to worship our God on this Super Bowl Sunday, I think it would be fun to talk about “Football Theology” by sharing some definitions of football terms that are given a “church twist.” Here it goes...

- **Tackle:** what the ushers do when a child is sneaking out of the service.
- **Fumble:** a lousy sermon.
- **Quarterback sneak:** Sunday school teachers entering the building five minutes after Sunday School begins.
- **Quarterback:** what church members want after putting 50 cent in the offering.
- **In the pocket:** where too many church members keep God’s tithe and their offerings.
- **End around:** diaper changing time in the nursery.
- **Illegal Motion:** leaving church before the benediction.
- **Interference:** whispering and talking during the sermon.
- **Penalty:** what the church gets when its members stay home.
- **Punt:** what the pastors do when nothing else seems to work.
- **National Anthem:** the choir and congregation doing their best singing “Amazing Grace.”

Probably at your Super Bowl party this afternoon, you could make up some of your own definitions.

Anyway, I would like to share the message of Super Bowl I see in the scripture reading for today. Usually the offensive line of Jesus’ team is made up with the big three (Peter, James, and John), but on this Christianity Super Bowl day which is the Day of Resurrection—Jesus’ team is made up with three women—Mary

Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. I'm sure that today's sports commentators would make this a big deal and discuss every aspect of this game.

Jesus has these rookies on his team to make a touchdown to win over the power of death through his resurrection.

1. WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THAT STONE FOR US?

Early in the morning of this Christianity Super Bowl day—the Day of Resurrection—we find these rookies moving silently toward the tomb whispering urgently each other....hurry....hurry....let's go and anoint Jesus' body. As they make their way to the tomb they are wondering *who would roll away the great stone* that covered the entrance of the tomb.

In a sense, these rookies are us as we walk through the journey of life to make a touchdown for Christ. We cannot move all the stones in our pathway by ourselves.

- Some are just too heavy for us!
- We cannot remove the mistakes we have made, the poor decisions, the hurt we have caused others, the bad judgments we have made.
- Resentments, rejection, injustice...the hurts we are carrying in life are too heavy for us.

These are stones that we cannot move by ourselves.

And somewhere out before us is a gravestone with our own name. All our exercise programs and diets, hair color, botox, and makeup may delay its coming or disguise it, but that stone is there. It is inevitable. There is some truth to the old joke about those who open the newspaper and look first at the obituary to make sure their name is not there. In a sense, we all come to Christ with the question: *Who will roll away that stone for ME?*

2. MARK'S ACCOUNT OF THE RESURRECTION ENDS IN FEAR

You may recall that Mark's account of the resurrection ends not in alleluias, but in fear and bafflement. So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them.... Trauma and ecstasy had seized them. It is a remarkable and somewhat frustrating way to end the story!

It leaves us dangling. Something in us wants the reunion, the breakfast on the beach, the glad alleluias, the big Super Bowl party with pork chops....ummm...yum! But, Mark's account of the resurrection ends unfinished!

We can imagine how the story was told just a few years after the events of the passion. A group is sitting around a fire late at night listening to a story told by a traveler who heard it from someone who heard it from someone else.

He ends the story with the women leaving the tomb in terror. ... and people were waiting and waiting...and finally someone broke the silence...saying...“**And what happened next?**” “Well, I don’t know.” The storyteller said. “All I know is what I heard. They went to his tomb and he was not there. An angel appeared to them, and they were frightened and ran away. That’s all I know.”

Other gospels, written years later, add to the story, but if all we had was the gospel of Mark, it would be a dangling gospel, ending in ambiguity and mystery and fear and bafflement. **But Mark was willing to tell the story that way because the reality of it had changed his life!**

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome stand beside us today and remind us that wherever we find ourselves along the journey of faith, *the life of faith is shaped by both trauma and ecstasy.*

The silence at the end of the Gospel of Mark is always waiting to be filled by the people of every generation who follow the lead of these three women. The Gospel of Mark says that they said nothing to anyone, but clearly that did not last. They had to speak, for they could not hold it in! And when they did speak, it was not to argue or to reason; it was to announce: Jesus is risen!

We do not believe in the resurrection because we can objectify it, create a computer model for it, quantify it, document it, analyze it, or authenticate it in any way that would be acceptable to the modern world. Resurrection resists logic; resurrection eludes empiricism; resurrection defies our common experience of the finality of death. And yet we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ with abandon. People gladly come to church; the music is majestic and the trumpets shout out the news that he is risen!

Here is the truth: if the only reality we can accept is the journalistic who-what-when-where-how facts of empiricism, then we need not bother with the truth of resurrection. But belief in resurrection, like belief in love itself, lives outside the test tube, thrives above the footnote, flourishes beyond science, and prospers on the far side of argument.

On this Resurrection Day God says, “I love you too much to let anything, even death, separate you from my love. I love you so much that I cannot let you go. I’ve got your back. There’s nothing to fear! So...go forth, my child! Make a touchdown for me! The victory is yours.”

The Resurrection Day is about the reality of death. In fact, the Apostle Paul called death the last enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26), and he compared death to the sting of a scorpion, which would hide in a blanket or a pair of shoes or a bag of some kind. People never knew when the deadly sting of a scorpion would strike.

That’s the way death is. We have experienced this last week and weeks before. We do not know when it will strike us. It is the image of death as a scorpion that stands behind the Apostle Paul’s great rhetorical question: Where, O death, is your sting? (1 Corinthians 15:55). He is taunting death! “Come on, Death! Is that the best you’ve got? Give me your best shot!”

Resurrection faith never denies the reality of death. When someone we love dies, we never “get over it.” We become more accustomed to the loss over time, but the pain of that sting lasts a lifetime and we learn to live with it. That is the price of love, and it is worth to pay that price.

Resurrection faith, however, declares that God is greater than the sting of death. We can have real hope, not because hope can be proven scientifically, but because we believe in a God who is greater than death.

God has made the touchdown for God’s love through his greatest quarterback, Jesus, to win over the power of death. This Jesus wants us, the rookies, to make a touchdown for Christ like he did for God for sharing God’s message of hope, love, and peace.

Through Communion, God’s greatest quarterback, Jesus, even showed us how we can make a touchdown for Christ.

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On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us,
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples,
and said, “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in
remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over,
he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said, “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
We offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ’s offering for us.

Let us pray...

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit, make us one in Christ and one in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, all honor and glory are yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Invitation & explain Communion Prayer
Explain about the Open Table.
Invite Communion Stewards...to come forward to serve.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

