

## **From This Corner**

*The following sermon was the key note message at the Cornerstone District  
Laity Banquet held in Ashville on April 4, 2006.*

### **Resurrection Power**

**Larry R. Baird**

1 Corinthians 15: 12-34

Colossians 1: 9-14

This evening is all about ministry. Essentially, it is about the recognition of and lifting up of the ministry of the λαοσ, the laity, those who are not clergy.

Let me say as we begin how much we appreciate you, for you are in truth the front line of Christian ministry. When Monday comes and the Church engages the world in our homes, places of employment, and our schools, you do the key work. As The Book of Discipline so aptly puts it, you make Christ visible to the world, and convince the world of the reality of the gospel, or in failure leave the world unconvinced of its truth.

Together laity and clergy have an awesome task. In effect, Jesus has left his ministry in our hands as surely as he left it in the hands of the apostles and the first disciples.

Sometimes it amazes me that Jesus left his ministry in our hands. Let us admit it. Sometimes in the midst of our conducting the life of the church we have every right to look at each other and say, “What was he thinking?” Yes, sometimes our “acting out” and “acting up” are surely an embarrassment to the Lord of the Church.

On the other hand, sometimes we see our congregations as participants in the Church doing wonderful, even amazing things for the building up of the Kingdom. Tonight we recognize some of the participants in that wonderful work.

I have chosen to speak with you about something we need to understand if we are going to be effective disciples for Jesus Christ and build up His Reign on earth. This something is the sustaining power that we must tap if we are to be effective as the Church of Jesus Christ.

I have chosen this topic, not only because it is our theme, but because my trips about our district, our conference, and our general church indicate to me that too many of us, too much of the time, are unaware that while Jesus has left us with the responsibility for disciple-making and witness, He has not left us without what it takes to do the job with excellence.

Let me describe the indicators of this.

- a) Some of our smaller churches think they cannot be effective simply because they are small.
- b) Some of our larger churches think they do not have the resources they need to do effective ministry, because the cost of doing ministry is too high.
- c) Some of our laity tell me they are “worn out” and do not have the energy to do what needs to be done.

- d) In too many of our churches people act as if the bottom line to effectiveness is simply working harder and longer at the same old things.
- e) In some churches the people are convinced that it is the pastor who solely either makes or breaks effectiveness, as if God only works through clergy.
- f) In far too many of our churches self-appointed gate keepers guard assets as though they own the Lord's resources, and as though our job is to make sure the church does not die.

In short, there is a crisis of confidence and energy in our churches that translates into the notion that we are on austerity power.

I share with you tonight that I am certain that nothing could be farther from the truth. There is no reasonable or credible explanation why not every one of our congregations is a powerful part of the whole Body of Christ. The fact of the matter is we are sitting on the most powerful energy source in the universe.

Some of you may remember a long-running TV show called "Beverly Hillbillies." The story line was shared in the theme song which went something like this:

Come and listen to a story about a man named Jed  
A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed,  
Then one day he was shootin' at some food,  
And up through the ground came a bubblin' crude.

Oil that is, black gold, Texas tea.

Well the first thing you know ol' Jed's a millionaire,  
Kinfolk said Jed move away from there  
Said Californy is the place you ought to be  
So they loaded up the truck and moved to Beverly.

Hills, that is.

Swimmin pools, movie stars.

The Beverly Hillbillies!

Jed thought he was poor, while all the time he was sitting on a wealth and potential he could scarcely comprehend.

What we as individual Christians and as local churches seem to often forget is that like Jed we are sittin' on "bubblin' crude." Too often, we sit around moping in a "poor baby" mode lamenting how things are not happening and we have scarce resources at hand to make it happen.

Jed was sitting on "bubblin' crude."

We are sitting on the "bubblin' crude" of the power of the resurrection.

I believe that the only way we can say we cannot fulfill our mandate to make disciples for Jesus Christ is to deny the resurrection, and its implication for Christian living.

The apostle Paul dealt with this in I Corinthians 15: 12-19.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

*12* Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?*13* If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised;*14* and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.*15* We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.*16* For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.*17* If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*18* Then those also who have died in Christ have perished.*19* If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

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The question is “do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the transference of that power when we come to Him in faith?”

Paul is saying that if we do not believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and the implications of that for the individual Christian and the church then we are “most to be pitied!”

Then he reminds us in verse 20: **BUT CHRIST HAS INDEED BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD!**

He picks up the theme also in Colossians 1: 9-14.

Colossians 1:9-14

*9* For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*10* so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.*11* May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

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You see what this is saying is that we have the power to be effective!

Abundant wonder working power!

Colossian 1: 11 specifically focuses on the power that will enable us to live lives that are fully pleasing to our Lord.

“Being strengthened” in that verse means “continuous empowerment, not even proportioned to our need, but to God’s abundant supply!”

Therefore, my dear friends lay and clergy, we need not be so pitifully consumed by our feelings of inadequacy. The same power that created the universe, raised Jesus Christ from the dead is ready for us to embrace, and when we embrace the truth of the resurrection we will never want for power.

The old gospel hymn says it well:

There is power, power, wonder working power

In the blood of the Lamb:

There is power, power, wonder working power

In the previous blood of the lamb.

That is resurrection power, the “bubblin’ crude” of the Holy Spirit. So I way, “what are we standing around moaning about?” Tap the well and bring

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<sup>2</sup>*The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

new life into the ministry we have been called to do. It is resurrection time.  
If we do not believe it and use it we are most to be pitied, and most pitiful.  
Amen.

Larry Baird