

Coram Deo  
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura  
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi  
Deo Volente

Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church

By the Rev. Dr. John S. Niles MSM CD

## “Built to Last”

*April 09 2023*

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

It was Feb. 27, 1991, at the height of Desert Storm, that Ruth Dillow received a very sad message from the Pentagon. It stated that her son, Clayton Carpenter, Private 1st Class, had stepped on a mine in Kuwait and was dead.

Ruth Dillow later wrote, "I can't begin to describe my grief and shock. It was almost more than I could bear. For 3 days I wept. For 3 days I expressed anger & loss. For 3 days' people tried to comfort me, to no avail because the loss was too great."

But 3 days after she received that message, the telephone rang. The voice on the other end said, "Mom, it's me. I'm alive." Ruth Dillow said, "I couldn't believe it at first. But then I recognized his voice, and he really was alive." The message was all a mistake!

She said, "I laughed, I cried, I felt like turning cartwheels, because my son whom I had thought was dead, was really alive. I'm sure none of you can even begin to understand how I felt."

Perhaps not, but some who walked the pages of the New Testament would have understood how she felt because they experienced the same emotions themselves. And in the face of His death everything changed, and in the light of His Resurrection life would be forever different.

### I

The Resurrection means that we have overcome **the limitations of the present**. "*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable...*" (1 Cor 15:42)

So much of our lives, it seems, is spent working and struggling to accumulate things that we think are important. But when we are face with having to deal with the ultimate questions of life and death; what happens after death, then all these things seem so unimportant, so inconsequential. We find ourselves thinking; what difference does it really make what kind of car we drive? Or what kind of house we live in? Or what kind of cloths you wear?

Death, for Ruth Dillow put life in to perspective – it pointed out what was truly important.

The Message of Easter is that in the face of death, the Resurrection gives us a new perspective on life.

As Mozart said "...I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity . . . of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness."

### II

The Resurrection means that we have overcome the limitations of the present and also the **regrets in past**. “...it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.” (1 Cor 15:43)

This life we live, we so often focus on our failures, faults, mistakes, weaknesses, blunders and miscalculations. There are things we wish we have not done, things we wished we have done, and things we wished we have done better, things we wished we have done different. The message of Easter and the Resurrection is “*that what is sown in dishonor is raised in glory*”, failure is never final, as long as we refused to give up. Failure is never final, as long as we choose to fail forward.

I came across a list of things this week that I’m supposed to do where I fail regularly.

- Experts say you should drink eight glasses of water a day – I don’t always do that.
- Dentists say you should brush your teeth after every meal and floss every day. I don’t always do that.
- I’ve been told I should never allow the gas tank in my car to get below half full. You don’t want to know about how many times I nearly had to walk down a road to the gas station.
- You should make your bed every morning, dust once a week, and vacuum a couple times a week. I’ve struck out on that.
- Doctors say the average adult should get no less than 8 hours of sleep per night – I think I’ve averaged about 4-6 ½.
- You’re always supposed to do the speed limit and not get road rage – I’m not even going to go there!

At the close of WWI, the French Army had hundreds of soldiers suffering from amnesia because of shell shock. A faulty record system lost the identity of these war victims.

To find their families and return them to their homes, an “Identification Rally” was scheduled in Paris. Thousands of relatives of the missing gathered in a great plaza. One by one, the men were led to a central platform to speak these words: “Is there anyone here who can tell me who I am?”

Easter tells us who we really are: sons and daughters of God!

### III

The Resurrection means that we have overcome the limitations of the present and also the regrets in past. And finally, the Resurrection means that we have overcome the **fear of the future**. “...it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.” (1 Cor 15:42)

People have many fears. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld says, “According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that seem right? That means to the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy”

Someone once said, “inch by inch life’s a cinch, yard by yard life is hard”. If we stretch life out beyond the day we are living – it becomes more difficult. Live life, as Dr. Osler says, “in day tight compartments.” Our Lord says it this way, “The days’ own worries are enough for the day.” Our Lord says, “Be not afraid.” And later, “in this life you will have tribulation -- trouble - - but courage, for I have overcome the world. The choice is ours. We can choose to borrow trouble from tomorrow or yesterday, and live life as if God is not there, or we can trust Him and seek Him with all our hearts. And live not in weakness, but in the power of his resurrection.

A florist received two requests for flower arrangements. One for a businessman who was opening a bigger and better new store. And the other for a man who had died. But somehow the florist got them mixed up. The business man received the one that said, "rest in peace." He was furious, so he went down to complain. And the florist said, "Well, if you think that is bad, just think what the man who died just received. "Good luck in your new location."

Or as a Church had on a Sign outside at Easter:

To our Christian friends happy Easter

To our Jewish friends happy Passover

To our Atheist friends Good Luck

You think about that. Amen