*-HURRAY!*

Gen. 3:8-15

Rev. 12:7-12a; Col. 2:13-15

April 24, 2022

For over three decades, Paul Harvey made a name for himself by telling “the rest of the story.” Day after day he came on our radios (yes, I did listen to stations that still carried him!) recounting familiar historical events and biographies of famous people. He did it with great drama, attention to detail, and impeccable timing, causing his listeners to realize there was more to those stories than we previously imagined.

With Easter, and on the week after Easter, chances are you’ve heard about the resurrection of Christ. But there’s more to this good-news story, this gospel of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection than receiving forgiveness now and heaven when you die.

Oh, we know that the cross and resurrection means our atonement, our restoration with God. That’s the part of the story we’re familiar with. Isaiah tells of it:

*He has borne our griefs*

*And carried our sorrows;*

*He was wounded for our transgressions*

*He was bruised for our iniquities*

*Upon him was the chastisement that*

*made us whole,*

*And with his stripes we are healed.*

I Peter 2:24 puts it like this:

*He carried in his own body on the cross the sins we committed. He did this so that we might live in righteousness, having nothing to do with sin. By his wounds you were healed”* (I Peter 2:24).

So the cross points to God who Himself made reconciliation between us and God. It’s called the atonement: the “at-one-ment.”

It’s this courtroom type view of the atonement-- that Christ took our punishment upon Himself, thus making us as if we were sinless in God’s eyes-- that we’re most familiar with, but there’s more! Some of the rest of the story has been hidden to modern Christians, but this is maybe the most important thing about our Lord’s death and resurrection to me.

We can picture the cross as pointing upward to God who loved us and reconciled us, but there’s the downward arm, buried in the earth, which points to the Devil below. The early church believed that through His death and resurrection Jesus defeated Satan, and all the evil Satan brings about. In Latin it was called *Christus Victor* (or Christ the Victor.) Early believers cited Colossians 2:15: “*He disarmed the rulers* (the principalities and powers of the air, as Ephesians has it) *and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him (*in Christ, huh?). Hebrews 2 says “*Through death Christ destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery* (that’s us, before Christ.) And I John 3:8 tells us, “*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil*.”

The downward post of the cross points to the *goal*. The goal of Christ’s redemption was to defeat sin, and death, and Satan himself—to destroy them; to put them to death in His death. The upward arm of that cross points to the *means*. The means of achieving this defeat of Satan was God’s making atonement for us. No longer bound by sin nor under Satan’s spell. That is all dead and behind us. Halleluiah! Hurray!

So now the rest of the story. While the story of how Mary’s little lamb Jesus died to save you from your sins is wonderfully and gloriously true, it’s only part of the story. The fuller story is that Mary’s little lamb was also the Lion of Glory. Jesus our Savior is Christ the Victor! When you forget that, when you forget the goal of Easter’s story, His story suddenly becomes all about YOU–God’s loving *you,* God’s forgiving *you,* and God’s accepting *you*. As far as most American Christians today are concerned, that IS the story.

But it isn’t. It’s only part of the story. When you accept it as being all there is to the Gospel, it keeps you and me from seeing and living into the rest of the story.

Back when you asked God to forgive your sins on the basis of Jesus’ death, He not only forgave you, He simultaneously placed you in Christ’s body, the Church. See, God intends for the Church to be a microcosm of His fully restored creation. 2nd Corinthians 5:17 says, “If anyone be in Christ, that person is a new creation.” So today you and I are part of God’s freed-up re-creation!

Why do we celebrate a season of Easter? To remember Jesus’ resurrection from the dead? To celebrate the forgiveness of our sins? Yes, that’s part of it. But remember, Jesus’ death and resurrection are the *means*, not the end.

The rest of the story is that the end *just started* when Jesus walked out of the tomb \_\_\_\_

And the end is still unfolding. Through His followers, Jesus is continuing to this day to destroy the works of the Devil, to conquer an unrelenting foe.

That process started at Easter when Christ broke out of the tomb, when Christ defeated and destroyed death, triumphing into life . . . anew. And that restoration process, that triumphing over hurt and death and pain and cruelty, is real, and it’s ongoing. . . in our world. Christ-ones are defeating Satan by being part of the activity of a Living Lord.

Matter of fact, we have evidence of it today in the acts of mercy and ministry you and I ourselves participated in in our $20 challenge.