

Monday, April 13, 2009

In the days which followed that first Easter, can you imagine what life was like for the friends of Jesus? Over and over again the questions: Is it possible? What is the truth of resurrection? What does it mean for Jesus and for us? What could be Jesus' plan of action now? Who should we tell?

This Easter weekend, I gave you several key words which seem to form a journey every thinking person is invited to walk as we wrestle with this remarkable event.

REMORSE . . . most of us have experienced the death of a close friend or family member. We understand the pain, the feeling of great loss, the emptiness. For Jesus' friends it was all that and more . . . a deep spiritual fog settled upon them too. If Jesus was who He claimed to be, God incarnate, Messiah, then how could He possibly allow Himself to be killed? There were no good answers as they grieved and with great anxiety wondered if they too were in great danger. Can you place yourself in their sandals?

REMEMBER . . . the previous months had been filled with wonder as they had seen Jesus heal the sick, help the blind to see and lame to walk, even cast out demons. There seemed nothing He couldn't do. His statement of impending death (Luke 18:31-34) as they went toward Jerusalem for Passover, left them confused. His words in the upper room (John 13-17) were exciting, yet so profound it would take them a long time to fully understand. But all His words seemed empty when Jesus died. Have you found the Bible to seem like empty words, or heaven seem silent when you pray? How do you feel and what do you do in those times?

RECONSIDER . . . Jesus had promised HE would return, He would rise from the dead. (Luke 18:33; John 14:3) But still, even to Peter and the others, it seemed like "nonsense" (Luke 24:9-12). What have you concluded about the resurrection of Jesus, and what difference does it make?

Tuesday, April 14, 2009

Each year a large percentage of the world's population have little time or patience with the "resurrection of Jesus" claim. It's "nonsense" to them and time spent pondering it is wasted time in their view. There were those who took it even further that first Easter. Matthew 27:57-66 give us insight into the fear of some that a "resurrection" story might surface, and so they took great precaution to be sure Jesus stayed dead, His body untouched.

However, Matthew describes a "violent earthquake", (Matt. 28:1-4) an angel rolling back the grave stone, and soldiers falling to the ground "as dead men", in shock! When those guards revived themselves, apparently they ran to report to the religious leaders what had happened, and a "cover-up" plan was devised (Matt. 28:11-15). Of course, the only thing that would ever convince our world that dead Jesus really was alive, would be His visible appearance! Matthew tells us the women who went to the tomb early that morning had such an encounter (Matt. 28:5-10). John 20:10-18 gives us another account. While different, they merge well together. Both name Mary Magdalene, both indicate a personal encounter with risen Jesus, both share the words of Jesus. Remember, two accounts of the same experience look at that experience differently. Since neither John nor Matthew was an eyewitness to those encounters, under the leading of the Holy Spirit they wrote as they remembered hearing it from Mary.

Now as then, those who hear this resurrection story are left to **RESOLVE** the miracle for themselves. All four Gospel writers give an account, and Paul later explains the absolute centrality of the resurrection to the Christian faith: Romans 1:1-4; 8:34; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-23. So what is your conclusion on the matter? What difference does it make this Tuesday in how you will live today?

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

Have you noticed how often you need to "**refuse**" the offers or requests of others? Those unwelcomed soliciting calls in the middle of dinner; the relentless barrage of commercials while watching your favorite TV program; the mailbox stuffed with catalogs, etc. What about the invites or pressure of your friends to . . .

From the time of Jesus' birth until His death, "refusal" was an ever-present part of His earthly journey. Herod refused the possibility of a "newborn king" (Matt. 2). The people in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth refused to hear His explanation that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy when it was read in the Synagogue (Luke 4:14-30). The religious leaders of His day repeatedly refused to accept His words as truth (John 7). Friends, every person needs to decide the source of their foundational life truth. God claims to define truth (Is. 45:19). Jesus claimed to BE the truth (John 14:6), and that His truth was light in our dark world (John 8:12, 31,32). So . . . what is your life foundational truth? Don't pass off the question. Like it or not, you are living your life according to some foundational truth . . . Is it real or are you developing truth as you want it to be? Be careful, truth is unchanging and regardless of what you desire, God defines truth!

Repeatedly some people refused the miracles as evidence of Jesus' divinity, and passed them off as sorcery or illusions. Consider John 10:19-33 and 14:11. What do you think about the miracles of Jesus?

Jesus made several statements about why He came to earth . . . Luke 19:10; Matt. 20:28; John 3:16 & 10:10, etc. Most refused to accept His offer. His death is the ultimate rejection by our human race. Refusal leads to rejection, and humanity, again this week, is rejecting God's offer of hope, help, healing, forgiveness, new life in Christ. Look closely . . . can you see specific examples today?

Thursday, April 16, 2009

By now Easter seems far away doesn't it? While we don't know how many times the risen Jesus appeared to His friends, we have enough accounts of such appearances that we can imagine His friends were constantly on the lookout, waiting for the next time!

Luke 24 tells us of the two friends walking on the Emmaus road, when a stranger walking on the same road joined their conversation. They didn't recognize Him until when, at the dinner table, He acted as the host, offering prayer for the meal, and breaking the bread. I believe it was those two acts . . . His prayer and the visible healed scars of His hands which they saw as He broke the bread . . . which convinced them that it was the risen Jesus!

John 20:16 tells us Mary recognized the risen Jesus when He said her name as they met in the garden that resurrection morning! John also tells us what it was like when he first saw Jesus, that Easter evening when He suddenly appeared among them (John 20:19,20).

We have little insight into what the days immediately following Jesus' resurrection were like for His friends. Jerusalem remained jammed with thousands of Passover visitors. We can suppose Jesus' friends moved about cautiously, yet I imagine they spent much time together discussing, maybe debating the events of the weekend, seeking to come to conclusions about the meaning of it all. Did they visit the tomb again? Did they repeatedly question those who had seen Jesus? Did they re-visit the garden of Gethsemane for prayerful reflection? Did they return to Bethany . . . to Mary, Martha and Lazarus' home? How many others did they tell?

May I urge you to write your conclusive statement about Jesus' resurrection. Would you be willing to defend it with your life, if need be? They all did eventually!!

Friday, April 17, 2009

Our theme verse for Easter 2009 was Isaiah 53:5 “. . . by His wounds we are healed.” One week after Easter, Jesus' friends were together again, as they had probably been many times that week. This time John tells us they seemed overwhelmed with caution, possibly fear, for they had the windows and doors locked “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:26). Can you blame them? Everything in their world was upside down! I can well imagine the questions had only increased during the week as they had grappled with the resurrection. Probably by now they had come to accept the fact, even though they couldn't explain it . . . but what did it mean for them and their future?

It appears the gathering in John 20 was still in Jerusalem, perhaps because they didn't want to risk missing Jesus the next time He appeared, if they left? Also, it seems clear Thomas had not yet seen Jesus and was understandably skeptical. It's OK friends, to struggle trying to understand the resurrection of Jesus. It's a miracle beyond comprehension. But it is central to the healing work that God wants to do in your life!

Jesus' life on this earth was an infusion of God's power and truth into our sin enveloped world. Jesus' death was the ultimate rejection by humanity, of God and God's involvement in our world. Jesus' resurrection was God's response to our rejection . . . His refusal to accept the rejection of some as a total rejection by all.

We have no record of risen Jesus walking down the busy streets of Jerusalem, or meeting with Pilate or the religious leaders who had sent Him to death. Jesus appeared healed, to His friends who needed healing from their pain of loss. Once He healed their hearts and restored their hope in Him, then He sent them to bring His hope to the world. Do you see yourself in God's process of hope offer to our world? Has risen Jesus healed you?



Pastor Doug Anderson

April 13 – April 17, 2009



His Wounds

. . . HOPE

for Living in

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