

GCCSI DEVOTIONAL



LENT

2020

Week 6

The Resurrection

Day 1: The Burial

Matthew 27:57-66

*His body bound and drenched in tears,
They laid him down in Joseph's tomb.
The entrance sealed by heavy stone,
Messiah still, and all alone.*

“O Praise the Name (Anastasis)” by Hillsong Worship, verse 3

A few years ago, my wife told me an experience she had while visiting a Bible theme park. In the middle of the day, the theme park had a reenactment of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. She was with a crowd of people watching the reenactment and among the group was a little girl. The little girl was visibly moved and cried as she saw Jesus being beaten and put on the cross. But as the crucifixion scene ended, and darkness fell, there was a sense of hope. The little girl looked at my wife and with confidence whispered, “He's coming back”.

Before we go to the resurrection, let us consider the days after Jesus died on the cross. The Gospels tell us that after Jesus died, a man named Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body. Luke tells us that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus but he was also a member of the Jewish council. He did not agree with the council's decision to crucify Jesus and out of a desire to honor Jesus, Joseph courageously asked Pilate for Jesus' body. Pilate granted Joseph's request Joseph buried Jesus in a garden near the site of the crucifixion.

The tomb that Jesus was buried was in a garden near the site of the cross. Jesus who lived a life of poverty was buried in Joseph's own tomb. And although the tomb was likely meant for Joseph, but out of honor and respect, Joseph desired to bury Jesus in his own tomb. The tomb's description was consistent with many first century examples of tombs. It was probably a cave dug out of limestone with a heavy round stone laid in front of it with a track in the ground that the stone could be pushed along.

What some may find surprising is that this act fulfilled a prophecy in Isaiah 53:9: “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” But the disciples would not understand this until

later. In the meantime, Jesus was still in the grave. And depending on who you were, you felt different things.

For Jesus' enemies, it seemed as if their problems were over. The imposter was dead and we can go on and get back to life as it should be. But there was still concerns. Matthew tells us that the Chief Priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate to ask for a guard of soldiers to make the tomb secure. They did not believe that Jesus would rise from the dead, but they were afraid that the disciples would come and steal the body. Pilate agreed and gave them a contingent of soldiers and made the tomb secure. But the guards were guarding people on the outside from coming in. They weren't expecting anyone to come out.

For Jesus' followers, it seemed as if all the hopes that Christ was the promised Messiah, were ended. Their leader, teacher, friend, master, Lord was dead. They had hoped that he would be the one who would bring in the kingdom of God. But now they would perhaps have to wait longer, or give up on this hope.

But the little girl in the theme park understood something that the disciples could not have known. Jesus will rise from the dead and he will conquer sin and death. Back at the theme park, the story of Jesus' resurrection continued. He was alive again! Death could not keep him in the grave. When the show ended, the little girl smiled and told my wife, “See! I told you he'd come back!”

Sometimes children have much to teach us older folks. Does your heart still fill with wonder when you hear that Jesus rose from the dead? Does it still catch your heart for a moment to know that the God of the universe loves you? When we hear that Jesus rose again from the dead do our hearts fill us with joy at the great work to reconcile us back to him? Let us pray that God would remind us and bring us to a place of wonder at God's mercy once again.

Questions for Meditation:

1. Has the story of Jesus been heard so many times that you take it for granted? Does the fact that Jesus died on the cross for your sin and rose again still fill you with joy and wonder?
2. How does Jesus' victory help shape your understanding of this current pandemic?
3. What is the condition of your heart as Easter approaches? Have your desires for other things made the Gospel story boring to you? Spend some time to repent and ask God to help you fight for the joy in Christ.

Day 2: The Announcement of the Angels

Matthew 28:1-10

Have you ever gotten unexpected Good News? Perhaps the promotion and the raise you weren't expecting. Or the high grade on the test you expected to fail? Or acceptance into the school you thought was impossible to get? Today's passage tells us good news that was completely unexpected. Jesus, the crucified Messiah is alive again.

After days of mourning and weeping, the loss and the pain of Jesus' crucifixion was still fresh on the disciple's hearts. They were too sad leave the safety of their locked room, but they knew they couldn't stay there forever. On Sunday, several women according to custom went to the tomb and anoint the body with spices and perfume. What they saw and heard was the first announcement that changed everything.

Thirty years before this event, a group of angels announced the birth of Jesus to a bunch of shepherds. But now an angel stood by the tomb and announced something that would forever change people's relationship with God forever. "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise (Luke 24:5-7)."

A few observations about this passage:

1. *The news announced by the angel was unexpected.* To state the obvious, dead people stay dead. They don't come back. The women were expecting to go to the tomb to anoint a dead body but they couldn't find the body. The situation left them "perplexed" (v 4). Even after the women announced the angel's news to the apostles, "these words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them (v.11)". But like unexpected good news, Jesus didn't stay dead.

2. *Jesus is to be categorized among the living, not the dead.* The angel announced that Jesus was not among the dead by asking a question- "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen". There was a shift in categories for Jesus. He was dead, but he is no longer.

3. *This was the first time the Good News was understood after Jesus rose from the dead.* Jesus had told several times before what would happen,

but Jesus' followers didn't understand it at the time. The angels' announcement was the first time the context fit the message. It was the first explanation of what was happening- "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified on the third day."

4. *Jesus honored the devotion of the women.* Much has been made about the fact that the first announcement of Jesus' resurrection was made to a group of women. Traditionally, women's testimonies were not seen as reliable. And even the Apostles thought what they said was an, "idle tale". They were the first to hear about Jesus' resurrection not because they were women per se, but because of their devotion to Christ.

The disciples were starting to understand what was happening. Although the news was hazy, and was just whispers just starting to spread, there was something that was starting to build in their hearts: hope. They would soon see Jesus themselves. But they would need help to understand what this all meant.

Questions for Meditation:

1. What was your first encounter with death? When did you realize the permanence of death?
2. How and when did you first hear about Jesus rising from the dead?
3. In the same way the disciples had to learn and grow in understanding what Jesus' death and resurrection meant, how have you grown since learning about Jesus' resurrection? How has the resurrection affected your life?

Day 3: My Father and Your Father; My God and Your God

John 20:11-18

Some of the most heartwarming videos you can find online are when military servicemen and women return from deployment. There is usually a hidden camera somewhere designed to capture the expression of a loved family member. The serviceperson returns home unexpectedly still wearing their uniform and the family member suddenly sees them. There is a moment of great joy and sometimes tears are shed as hugs are given and expressions of joy are made.

One can only imagine what it was like for Jesus' followers to see the resurrected Christ. Seeing Jesus alive again must have taken their breath away. There was probably a mixture of shock, joy, and hope as the one they loved was back with them once again. But when Jesus came back from the dead, Jesus taught that it wasn't just good news that he was back. He also told his followers that our status with God the Father has changed as well.

Mary, who was perhaps the one most sensitive and attuned to the Savior's situation, stayed at the tomb after the women went back to tell the Apostles that Jesus' body wasn't in the tomb. In tears and in confusion, she assumed that the body of Jesus was stolen. In tears she turned from the angels talking to her and heard another voice as her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" "It must be the gardener", she thought. Who else could it be? In desperation, she asks him if he carried the body away. "Tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." But the voice says to her, "Mary."

There was something familiar about that voice. She heard it before. Looking up, it took a few moments for her mind to comprehend who she was seeing. But, no it can't be. It is! "Rabboni!" she exclaimed. We're not told what happened, but perhaps out of joy she wanted to hug him or hold on to him. But Jesus said, "do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father." But Jesus had an important task for her to do. She had to tell the disciples the following message: "Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.'"

This line uses the language of family. Jesus calls his followers, "brothers". He is ascending to, "my Father and your Father," and, "my God and your God." Jesus was telling us something about our

relationship with God. God the Father is our Father. Jesus is our brother. Hebrews 2:11 tells us, "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source, that is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers."

How is it a comfort for you to know that Jesus is your brother and that God is now your Father? For some of us, we might not have a great relationship with our siblings or our Father. It might be helpful to consider other types of relationships. If there is a stranger or a someone you don't know passing you on the street, you expect too much from that person. Or perhaps you are a customer visiting a business. You would expect a waiter or a service representative to help you, but only to a certain extent. You wouldn't expect them to be at your hospital bed in an emergency. But what would a good older brother be like? We can expect an older brother to help and protect you. They would defend you and teach you. They would help you when you do something wrong and be loyal. Similarly, a Father would care for their children. He would protect, provide and lead you in the things of life.

There's a reason why Jesus chose these words when he saw Mary. The intimacy that God desires for us has been accomplished by Jesus. He chose the language of family so that we can understand that Christ, our brother, has made us right again before the Father.

Questions for Meditation:

1. Consider a time where you saw someone you loved after being separated for a long time. How was the experience?
2. How does it comfort you knowing that God desires to be your Father and Christ your brother?
3. Do you ever doubt God's care for you? How does remembering the cross help you?

Day 4: The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-35

Word was starting to get around about Jesus' resurrection. Most didn't know what to do with this news. While the disciples were still processing this unexpected event, Luke tells us that two disciples were travelling to a town called Emmaus. The two discussed what was going on when Jesus walked right up to them but they were kept from recognizing him.

Jesus continued on in conversation with the two of them and faked ignorance. The disciples told him what their thoughts were of him- "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." They told how they hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. But he was put to death by the chief priests and rulers to be crucified. Some of the women of their group were at the tomb that morning and could not find his body. The women told them of angels that announced that Jesus was alive.

Jesus' response may have caught the disciples by surprise. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Luke tells us that Jesus had a Bible study with the disciples right then and there. "Beginning from Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (28)."

Later on, when they sat down and broke bread together, they finally realized who it was that was speaking to them. But in that moment, Jesus vanished from before them. The two disciples asked each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road while he opened to us the Scriptures (32)?"

Here are a few things for us to think about from this passage:

1. The Bible is about Jesus- Often when we have Bible studies or read commentaries we often convicting topics are weighed less simply by saying, "it's your opinion." But here is the Son of God instructing his disciples about *his* interpretation. The resurrected Christ is saying that the major theme and point of the Old Testament is himself. The laws and the teachings of the prophets ultimately point to Jesus.
2. Jesus called the disciples "slow in heart" because they didn't understand that the Old Testament passages pointed to Jesus.

Specifically, Jesus pointed out the writings of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy), and the Prophets (Isaiah- Malachi). The Law talked about Israel's obligation to obey God. But Israel had failed over and over again. Jesus came to fulfill the requirements of the law and take the punishment for disobedience. The prophets wrote about how God would send a redeemer and described what this redeemer would be like.

3. Jesus' teachings about the Bible burned their hearts- The phrase, "hearts burn" meant that Jesus' teaching spoke to them in such a way that excited them and ignited their passion for God and his purposes in the world. In many ways, that's how we were meant to read the Bible. Far from being a boring or a dry book, the Bible is a book that awakens the spirit to know, love and serve God.

To read the Bible is to read about one you love. You read about God's character, but you also read about how this God who created you loved you so much that he put on flesh to become one with us. This God sent his one and only son to die on the cross for your sin. May our hearts burn again as Easter approaches and we remember Christ's death and resurrection.

Questions for Devotions:

1. Consider your Bible studies or group discussions. What would Jesus say about those meetings? What are some ways your group would change if Christ was present in those groups?
2. What does it look like to interpret the Bible with Christ as the center?
3. When was the last time your heart burned when reading the Bible? What are some reasons why the Bible have become dry in your own life either in the past or more recently?

Day 5: Jesus Appears to the Disciples

Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-29

After Jesus rose from the dead, he spent time with his disciples. What does the risen Savior do? His resurrection was not simply a neat trick. Nor was it meant to simply be to bring comfort to his immediate friends. The resurrection was a declaration that Christ's sacrifice on the cross justified those who have faith in Jesus. The payment for our sin has been paid and no other sacrifice is needed. So what did Christ do while he met with the disciples after he rose? It seems as if when Christ met with his disciples his actions fell into one of three categories.

First, Jesus met with his disciples to strengthen their faith. We're told in the Gospels that Peter was left in a pretty bad state after he denied Jesus three times. In accordance with Jesus' predictions, Peter failed Jesus and before the resurrection, Peter was seen running off and weeping. In the book of John, Jesus restores Peter by asking Peter if he still loved Jesus three times. Three times, Peter affirms his love for Jesus. Even after Jesus appeared to the disciples were still full of doubt and were even afraid they were seeing a ghost. Jesus let the disciples touch his wounds and he ate food in front of them showing that he was not a ghost. The one disciple left out was Thomas who for some reason wasn't there when Jesus first showed himself. Thomas (later known as the doubter) loudly said that he would not believe unless he could touch Jesus' hands and his side. Later on, Jesus allowed Thomas to touch him and declared, "Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed (John 20:29)."

Second, Jesus had to explain the significance of what happened. The disciples may believe that Jesus rose from the dead, but they may not have fully understood what it meant. Jesus had to explain it to them. First Jesus pointed out that the events of Christ's life was a fulfillment of Scripture. As we saw yesterday, Jesus had to explain it to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:26-27). Jesus had to also explain it to the rest of the disciples. "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead (Luke 24:45-47).'"

After Jesus explained that the events were grounded in Scripture, he taught them what it meant. "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations (Luke 24:47). Jesus

died so we can have our sins forgiven. His death made us right before God.

Third, Jesus gave the disciples a mission. The disciples were to carry this news to the rest of the world. The Apostles were called to be witnesses of these events (Luke 24:48). Luke tells us that Jesus told his disciples to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. Matthew tells us that Jesus gave the great commission and promised to be with them to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20). John tells us that Jesus breathed on the disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit. "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you (John 20:21)."

The Gospel is a specific message that is centered on a specific event. It answers the question: What happened? But it also tells us why it matters. Jesus who claimed to be the promised Messiah, God in the flesh was crucified by sinful people. He gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins but was raised again to life. This event changed our relationship with God. Jesus' death and resurrection brings us reconciliation with God. It is a message that is changing lives all over the world today.

Questions for Meditation:

1. How does Jesus' treatment of his disciples after the resurrection comfort you?
2. How did you hear the message of Christ? Who told you about it?
3. How well can you explain the Gospel to people? If you were asked by someone what do Christians believe, how would you answer?

Day 6: The Restoration of Peter

John 21

No study that covered the events of Jesus' resurrection would be complete without studying about how Jesus restored Peter (otherwise known as Simon). The Apostle John ends his gospel with Jesus' interaction with Peter. Jesus had already revealed himself alive to the disciples. One morning, Peter decided to go fishing. A few of the other disciples agreed to go with him. They fished all night and were not able to catch anything but as the sky brightened and the sun broke through the horizon, they could see a man on the shore. Not knowing it was Jesus, the man asked if they caught any fish, to which the disciples answered, "No". Jesus told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat but the disciples were not able to haul the nets in because of the large catch. Someone told Peter that it was Jesus. Peter as per his personality, put his shirt on and jumped into the water to see Jesus. The disciples joined them soon afterwards.

Jesus already had a charcoal fire going with some cooked fish and bread. In spite of the disciple's failure the night Jesus was betrayed, Jesus made breakfast for them. No one asked who he was. They all knew.

After breakfast was finished, Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" The charcoal fire and the cool morning air must have brought Peter back to the night Jesus was put on trial. Without hesitation, Peter said, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again, Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter replied, "Yes, Lord you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Tend my sheep." A third time, Jesus asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" This time, the question grieved Peter. It was three times that Peter denied Jesus. Now it was the third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Jesus. "Lord," he replied, "you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus replied to him, "Feed my sheep."

What was going on? Likely Jesus was bringing Peter back to that moment. Smell has a strong connection with memory. Peter likely smelled the charcoal fire, felt the cool morning breeze and the food in his belly and was brought back to that night, the night where he had denied even knowing Jesus. He did it three times. Here Jesus was restoring Peter. But Jesus wanted to demonstrate his love in a practical way. There was nothing that Peter could do to pay back to Jesus what Jesus did for him. But Peter would be tasked with loving and caring for those whom Jesus loved. Peter would need to shepherd those who put their

faith in Jesus. He would need to teach them about Jesus. He would need to care for these people and explain what it was like for someone to be forgiven by Jesus.

Jesus would explain to Peter that in the past he would dress himself and go wherever he wanted. But now as someone who loved Jesus, he would stretch out his hands and be dressed by another and carry him where he does not want to go. John tells us that Jesus was telling Peter how he would die in order to glorify God. And according to tradition, Peter was caught and crucified upside down.

John ends his book by telling Peter to, "follow me!" Peter in a moment of curiosity asked Jesus about John and said, "what about him?" Jesus probably sighed and said to Peter, "If it's my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" I like to imagine the book of John ending with Jesus and Peter walking along the shore having a private conversation about what Jesus wanted Peter to do. But the call for us as believers is the same as Peter's. We are all forgiven sinners. We are sinners who have been made saints by the blood of Christ. Each of us are called to follow the Master where he leads.

Questions for Meditation:

1. Is there a sin that you are embarrassed about? Is there something that would make you uncomfortable if you were to admit it in front of other people?
2. As you think about this sin, how would you feel if Jesus were to ask you, "Do you love me?"
3. How would you feel if Jesus were to prompt you to "follow me!" Would you be hesitant? Would you be fearful?
4. How does Jesus' treatment of Peter and His promise to be with us bring you comfort?