

DAY 58 ~ Monday, October 5, 2009

*As you complete your journey with God today,
please read Mark 16:1-8*

“You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here.”

“It is finished.” These three words carry the sound of hope’s end. If Mark and the other gospel writers had received no further story to record after these words were spoken by their Teacher who had carried their hope simply to an agonizing death on the cross, where would our hope be? It would surely not be in a dead man who claimed to be God. However, because of the Resurrection my hope is alive! Because of the Resurrection recorded here, “It is finished,” is Jesus’ song of victory and Satan’s confession speech to a God who forever has power over him.

I must realize daily that I am hopeless without Jesus. That is the beginning of understanding the gospel. Then I must crush, smash, throw out, and laugh at any hopelessness I feel. Why? I know Jesus, and, therefore, hope alone defines me.

Sexual immorality...the Resurrection alone gives power over that. Destroying Christ’s body by talking badly about other people at church...the Resurrection alone gives power over that. Neglecting a Jesus who is right in front of us by looking down on the poor, all the while praying for God to reveal to us ways to serve him; joyously allowing materialism to define us and our families; singing songs of praise with our mouths while our hearts are bored, dead, and hard; feeling more excitement about celebrity gossip or sports than these morning devotions; justifying not fully following extreme commands of Jesus by saying, “Well, Jesus wants me to be comfortable,” (of course he does, that’s why He saved you from a never-ending Hell) -- all of these patterns can be broken by the single moment of the Resurrection of Jesus. Isn’t it true that the easiest thing to do when reading a devotion is to think it doesn’t apply to us?

Oh, may we gain power in this life by dying. Then after dying, to come out of the tomb with the identity of one who is fully alive. Every person everywhere is the same in what they need down in the core of who they are. We were all created with the desire to be “home.” Home is where we first came from and we all came from the heart and love of God. The Resurrection is our way back home.

“Help me, my God, in this my good purpose and in thy holy service: and grant that I may now in this day begin perfectly; for that which I have done hitherto is as nothing.”

–Daily prayer of Thomas A’ Kempis

Zac Harrison

Removing Obstacles

Mark 16:3 *“and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb”*

The story of the Resurrection is filled with what seems like insurmountable obstacles. First, there is the issue of how to deal with the physical body of Jesus following the crucifixion. Since Jesus had died a few hours before sundown on Friday, it was against Jewish law for anyone to do physical work or to travel on Sabbath (Saturday). It was also against Jewish law to let a dead body remain exposed overnight (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Technically, the body was still under the authority of the Roman government. Boldly, Joseph of Arimathea went before Pilot and asked for permission to take the body of Jesus. Mark tells us that Joseph was a “prominent member of the Council.” (15:43). He was also secretly a disciple or follower of Jesus. Amazingly, Pilot consented! God was already at work in the details of overcoming those things that seem impossible. Joseph laid the body in a tomb, covered only with linen. The tomb was an opening cut into the rock. Joseph rolled the stone into place while Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus watched (Mark 15:42-47.)

Since the Jewish Sabbath began at sundown, the women had to wait until Sabbath was over before they could finish the proper burial arrangements. On the first day of the week, Mark’s gospel tells us that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, dutifully made their way to the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid. With spices in hand, they considered the task that was before them. Utmost in their minds was the second major obstacle: how to move the heavy stone so they could reach the body.

Again, God was moving ahead of them! When the women reached the tomb, the first thing they saw was not an empty tomb, but that the stone they had been so worried about was moved away. God had already resolved the very thing that had consumed them with worry.

In our human condition, we are tempted every day to see those things that appear to be obstacles to our plans. Like the women on that morning, we fret and worry and agonize over how to overcome what seems to be the impossible. Sometimes we become so obsessed with the things in our lives that appear to be obstacles to progress that we become paralyzed, unable to move forward. Fear and frustration replace enthusiasm and optimism. Friends, we are created and loved by a God who knows no obstacles! Even death cannot block the things He has ordained and planned. Remember the words of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:35-36? Just as things seemed to be at their worst, Jesus knew that with “*Abba*, the Father,” all things are possible—even the resurrection of the body!

What are those things that are your “stones” that need to be rolled away?

How can you trust God to go ahead of you to prepare the way and remove those perceived obstacles in your faith journey?

Walking with God in Prayer

Praise God that He is a God of possibilities!

Confess and name those things in your life that you consider to be obstacles in your journey.

Thank God for His faithfulness in all situations.

Ask God to continue to go ahead of you and remove those things that are barriers to your witness.

Lisa Johnson

DAY 60 ~ Wednesday, October 7, 2009

*As you complete your journey with God today,
please read Mark 16:1-8.*

Biblical scholars aver that had not Jesus risen, we might never have heard of Him. The women came to the tomb to pay tribute to the dead body of the One whom they loved. The disciples, meanwhile, were overwhelmed with sadness -- their entire enterprise seemed to have ended in tragedy.

But something happened that dramatically changed all of this. Jesus rose from the dead. This one act validated His three year ministry and set in motion fresh attitudes and acts that gave birth to the church.

The good news was that Jesus was not a figure in a book that made good reading, but was a living presence that reoriented people and sent them on a divine, earth-changing mission. He was not someone about whom we discuss, but one who engages us to bring wholeness to a fractured world.

In May we celebrated Aldersgate Sunday, the anniversary of John Wesley's "heart warming" experience in 1738, in a small chapel near St. Paul's Cathedral in London that gave birth to Methodism. On that day as a dedicated, skilled clergyman in the Church of England (Anglican), Wesley experienced the presence of the living, loving Christ assuring him that his sins were forgiven, not just those of the world.

A new partnership developed that was to renew Wesley, revive the church, and "save England from a French Revolution" (so writes Lecky, a 19th century Irish historian). Wesley discovered as a learned English clergy person that the Christian life is not knowledge about Christ, but acknowledgment of Him as personal Savior and Lord.

Mark's early (65 A.D.) abbreviated version of the resurrection tells us something else that is enlightening for the Christian life. The

angel who met the women who came to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body told them that Jesus had risen. Then he added the admonition: "Go tell His disciples **AND** Peter that He is risen...He is going before you to Galilee."

The often overlooked news here was his singling out of Peter to tell him of Jesus' resurrection. This cheered Peter who was tortured by his disloyalty (denial of Christ). It reminds us that our Lord does not focus on our failures, but upon our acknowledgment of sin and sincere repentance. Jesus would comfort the penitent sinner more than punish the sin. God loves us above all else. Truly, He "lights up" our lives.

To journey further with God today, read other resurrection stories: Matthew 28; Luke 24; and John 20, 21.

Prayer: *Our Father, we rejoice in the good news that your Son was victorious over sin and death, and that we, too, may live with certainty both now and forevermore. In the Name of our Triumphant Lord we pray. Amen*

George Harjes

DAY 61 ~ Thursday, October 8, 2009

*As you continue your journey with God today,
please read Mark 16:1-8.*

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body.

At times I am totally unprepared for the little things that happen that transport me back to my time in Kenya and the experiences and the faces that forever changed my heart and those same faces that God uses to continually transform my spirit...

I was asked to write a devotion about this passage of Scripture and immediately I was reminded of another woman named Salome, (which in Hebrew means “peace”), that I met in Kenya. Salome and her husband Joseph are the parents of over fifty children, two beautiful daughters of their own and many other children who desperately need a place of peace and refuge.

Salome and Joseph’s journey began in 2003 when they felt moved to take in children from the streets. In an area, a country, a continent where extreme poverty, lack of food and water, intense illness and violent crime are common, this couple saw beyond their own comfort and security. Instead of living the self-preserving life that so many do, Salome and Joseph did the unthinkable by taking in child after child from the streets. These children are of questionable tribal heritage, children that others choose to see as a burden, children who are the picture of what Jesus called “the least of these.” Providing a home for these children, Salome and Joseph offer them a life away from the violence of the streets that is far too often the sad reality for many others. Instead, they provide them a home filled with love, a home of freedom from persecution, a home of unbelievable joy and peace.

What Salome does should be respected, honored, praised, and yet, when speaking with her, she tells you about the blessings she receives from the children. The joy she experiences when each of

them smiles, excels, or succeeds. With a smile unlike any I've ever seen, she says she is not the blessing, but the one blessed. the morning after the Sabbath to properly prepare the body of the dead for burial, to provide some sense of peace, was not aware that she was indeed the one who had received the greatest blessing - the blessing that Jesus gave to all of us when he sacrificed himself on that cross and conquered death in order to provide each of us a home, a freedom, a peace in him for now and for all eternity.

If you want to continue your journey further with God today, read Matthew 25:31-46.

Walking with God in prayer: Heavenly father, your love is so huge that you sent your son to die for me so that I may be called your son or daughter. You have brought me into your family, your home, your peace and I am so very grateful. May my life reflect that gratefulness as I strive to continually live in a way that honors you.

Meredith Bennett

DAY 62 ~ Friday, October 9, 2009

*As you begin your journey with God today,
please read Mark 16:1-8*

The townships outside of Durban, South Africa are scattered across the landscape like cones from a copse of pine trees. Some begin at the lip of ridges meandering to the valley below. Others huddle close – hundreds of houses with shoulders nearly touching. Need and survival don't always produce the best city planning.

I had been in Africa for about a week planting subsistence gardens. The group I was with had quickly bonded under the emotional highs and lows of meeting Jesus in the faces and stories of abject poverty. With our hands stained by sewage soaked soil, we could no longer politicize or rationalize “just as you have done it to the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.” Starvation, HIV/AIDS, and oppression had names and eyes filled with tears of hope, appreciation, and uncertainty.

The day began with the typical flurry of organizing and transporting two-hundred volunteers. Our group left later than most, twelve people bounding down the left side of the road in a van made for six. Frustration pulled at our frayed emotions. There were no gardening tools for our team. We had flown thousands of miles to plant gardens, our trip was nearly over, but we had no tools. I began to search the Psalms as we bounced along. I stumbled upon Psalm 9:18, “For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.” Our taxi finally stopped in the center of the township. Our team exited and gathered in a circle. I read the passage aloud and then we as the body of Christ claimed the passage as our prayer for the day.

Minutes later a local woman offered us a rusty hoe with a dry-rot handle. It was all we needed. Word began to spread throughout the township that Americans had come to plant free gardens. Women, children, and men rushed ahead of us preparing the soil for their friends, families, and neighbors. Late in the afternoon after we had planted more gardens than we could count, I returned

the rusty hoe with the dry-rot handle to its owner. Her eyes gleamed as I thanked her. “The hope of the poor had not perished forever.”

The women walking to the tomb to care for the body of Jesus on that first Sunday morning were preoccupied with the question, “Who will roll away the stone for us?” On that day outside of Durban, South Africa, my team and I were preoccupied with the question, “Who will provide tools for us?” The answer to both questions was and is the same.

If you want to journey further with God today, read 2 Kings 4.

Walking with God in Prayer: Father, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus you roll away the stones in our lives. Forgive us for focusing on questions that distract us from following and serving you. Give us the faith to act in ways that recognize and proclaim that you alone are the source of salvation.

Allen Hoskyn

DAY 63 ~ Saturday, October 10, 2009

**Reflection on
The Resurrection of Jesus**

Mark 16: 1-8

Spend Time in the Word:

Review the Scripture passages for the week. List one or two ways you can apply the Scripture passage to your life.

How does this passage impact your personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

What actions will you take to live a life of faith outside the walls of the church?

DAY 64 ~ Sunday, October 11, 2009

Text: The Resurrection of Jesus

Message Notes:

Important Words:

Other Scriptures mentioned in the message:

Questions that come to mind concerning the message:

How can I apply this message to my life?

How can I be a witness to the world?

*To listen to the Sunday message again,
please visit our website at www.funclv.org*