

The Resurrection: Key to Faith

A tutor assigned to visit children in a large city hospital received a routine call requesting that she visit a sixth-grade child to help him with his nouns and adjectives so he wouldn't fall behind the others in his class.

It wasn't until the tutor was outside the boy's room that she realized he was in the hospital's burn unit. No one had prepared her to find a young boy horribly burned and in great pain. Knowing she couldn't just turn around and walk out, she stammered awkwardly, "I'm the hospital tutor, and your teacher sent me to help you with nouns and adjectives." The boy was in so much pain that he barely responded. But the tutor stumbled through the English lesson anyway.

When she arrived the next morning, a nurse on the burn unit asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" As the tutor began to apologize, the nurse interrupted her. "You don't understand. We've been so worried about him. But since you were here yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's responding to treatment as if he has decided to live." Later that day, the boy told the tutor he had given up hope until she came. His outlook changed when he came to a simple realization: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adjectives with a boy who was dying."

Jesus' resurrection is an invitation to celebrate the gift of life even when all we see around us is fear, pain, disappointment, and brokenness. It shows us that on the other side, there is resurrection and life.

- 1. What fears could be alleviated if people fully embrace the significance of Jesus' resurrection?*
- 2. What other good things can result from this as well?*
- 3. Why is the Resurrection the key to understanding who Jesus is?*

An Empty Tomb

Mark 16:1-5, KJV

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

Mark 16:1-5, NIV

¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

The Friday before what we now call Easter Sunday was a difficult day for Jesus' disciples and others who followed Him. What they had expected before Jesus' crucifixion was a revolution led by a charismatic leader whom they believed was their promised Messiah. Instead, they got an execution. Some, including Peter and the other remaining Eleven, went into hiding, fearful perhaps that the Romans would do to them what they had done to Jesus.

Among those witnessing Jesus' crucifixion were Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus had freed from possession by seven demons (Luke 8:2); Mary, the mother of one of the two disciples named James; and Salome, the mother of James and John (Mark 15:40). After Jesus was removed from the Cross on which He was crucified, Joseph of Arimathea and a Pharisee named Nicodemus wrapped Jesus' body in 75 pounds of spices and laid Him inside Joseph's tomb (John 19:38-42).

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary noted where Jesus was laid (Mark 15:47) and may have wanted to anoint His body at that time but apparently did not have enough spices on hand to do so. It was likely too late that day to purchase any and doing so the next day would have been prohibited since it was the Sabbath. And so, when the Sabbath ended, they purchased the required spices and then early the next morning went to Jesus' tomb so they could anoint Him.

The women had a legitimate concern as they traveled to Jesus' tomb. They wondered how they were going to gain entrance to it since it was covered by a large stone, one that would require great effort to move. But when the women arrived at Jesus' tomb, they saw the huge stone rolled away and, though undoubtedly shaken by this, entered the tomb. When they did, they found that Jesus' body was missing. Sitting at the place where Jesus' body was supposed to be was a young man dressed in white.

It should be no surprise that the women were alarmed by what they were witnessing. What they expected to find that first Easter morning was a tomb protected by a heavy stone guarded by soldiers (Matt. 27:65). Inside, they expected to find a dead body. What they found instead was an open entry into an empty tomb and a stranger in a white robe.

4. *What did the women in today's passage do following Jesus' death?*

5. *What did they expect to find when they arrived at His tomb?*

6. *What did they find instead?*

7. *How did they respond? What contributed to their response?*

A Risen Lord

Mark 16:6-8, KJV

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of

Mark 16:6-8, NIV

6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the

Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

7But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

8Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

The stranger in Jesus' tomb was an angel whose response to the women's fears was both sensitive and systematic. He first addressed their emotional state. They were afraid and justifiably so. What they were experiencing was unexpected, in some ways shocking, and initially unexplainable. The angel, however, encouraged them not to be afraid, knowing he had something to tell them that would replace their fear with joy.

The angel then affirmed their reason for being there. They were looking for Jesus, and that was a legitimate desire. Jesus had died, and they wanted to pay their respects to Him. The only problem was that Jesus was not where they expected Him to be.

The angel then laid out the facts. Jesus was not in the tomb. That was true. It was also obvious. The explanation for this was less so. For the reason Jesus' body was missing was that He had risen from the dead!

The angel didn't ask the women to take his word for this, however. He told them to look once again on the place where Jesus had been laid and to confirm His body was indeed not there. He then told them where Jesus could be found: He was traveling to Galilee.

The angel then told the women to share what they had seen and heard with Jesus' remaining disciples, including Peter. He finished by promising the women that they would find the one they were looking for. Jesus was alive, and they would see Him!

The women found this difficult to grasp. Although they

could clearly see that Jesus' tomb was empty, they did not understand at that time the significance of what the angel was telling them. They left the tomb amazed by what they'd witnessed, trembling because of the experience, bewildered regarding what it meant, reluctant to speak to anyone about it.

The story of Jesus' empty tomb does not end here, of course. According to John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene did not entirely believe what the angel told her and after making her way to where Peter and the other disciples were hiding, said that someone had stolen Jesus' body (John 20:1-2). Peter and John then went to Jesus' tomb and saw, too, that it was empty (20:3-10). Afterward, Jesus appeared to Mary outside the tomb, first comforting her, then revealing Himself to her (20:11-18). She was the first of many to personally see Jesus after His resurrection and the first to share with others that she had seen Him.

We do not have the advantage of experiencing the physical presence of our risen Savior. But Jesus' empty tomb provides ample evidence that He has risen from the dead. And though He does not dwell among us in an actual body, He does indwell us with His Holy Spirit. Knowing that Jesus walks with us in this fashion should relieve us of fears we may have about what comes when we leave this world behind.

Do not fear! Christ has risen from the dead!

8. *How would you describe the angel's response to the three women?*



9. *What did he promise?*

10. *What did he instruct them to do?*

11. *How did the women respond?*

A first-century tomb with a rolling stone in Jerusalem, possibly used by Herod the Great's family.

Jesus Is Alive!

Although I grew up knowing that Jesus walked the earth at one time and provided an example of how we are to live, I did not appreciate the significance of His empty tomb until I was about 20. Before then, I often lived in fear that I would fail to do what God demanded of me and could end up suffering the consequences of His displeasure.

My Jesus at that time was a “dead” one. I didn’t understand that He was alive and He could indwell me with His Spirit. I didn’t know what it meant to live as if I were forgiven instead of believing I had to work to earn God’s approval.

That changed when I saw what Jesus had done for some people in a church I’d been invited to. They didn’t treat Jesus as if He were dead. They responded to life’s issues as if He were alive. Rather than fearing they might do something to step on God’s toes and be doomed to eternal separation from Him, they were living with the assurance that their sins were forgiven. They looked forward to walking life’s paths with Him and were confident they had an eternal relationship with God.

I wanted their hope; I wanted their confidence; I wanted the same relationship they had with Jesus. And so I turned my life over to Jesus and invited Him into my life.

Knowing that Jesus is alive, that He wants to indwell us, and that He wants to walk with us on life’s paths should result in hope and not despair, in peace and not anxiety, in confidence and not fear, in the knowledge that we are not walking through this life alone, and that eternal joy awaits us.

12. *What are some fears or anxieties you personally have that could be alleviated if you fully understood and embraced the significance of Jesus’ resurrection?*

13. *What are some hopes or confidences you have or could have as you consider what happened that first Easter morning?*

14. *What are some other ways you do or could benefit from knowing Jesus is alive?*

Now What?

Knowing that Jesus is alive should make a difference on how we respond to the challenges we face each day. It should replace the anxieties regarding what we're experiencing now with hope regarding what is to come. The decision to do that sometimes needs to be a daily one, as we pray this prayer: "Dear Jesus, let the knowledge that You are alive and dwelling among us make a difference in my life today."

► *Write out at least one way that Jesus' resurrection can make a difference in your life this week. Then make a commitment to pray about this every day, asking Jesus to help you change your perspective, so your response to His resurrection is real, evident, and meaningful.*

KEY VERSE

And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. —Mark 16:6, KJV

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him." —Mark 16:6, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Week of April 1 through April 7

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. John 1:37-42—Come and See.

Tues. Jeremiah 17:12-17—Heal Me, and I'll Be Healed.

Wed. John 4:4-18—Jesus Provides Living Water.

Thurs. John 4:19-29, 39-42—Worship God in Spirit and Truth.

Fri. Psalm 66:1-5, 13-20—Tell What God Has Done.

Sat. Isaiah 6:1-8—Here Am I; Send Me.

Sun. Luke 5:17-26—Jesus Heals and Forgives.