

(RE)DISCOVER JESUS: (YOU CAN) TRUST THE PROMISES

Luke 23:44-56

Intro

So here it is on Easter morning and the minister guy wants to back up.

‘But...’

And I mean that, not from a place of verbal redirection.

No, the way that Luke starts out his recounting of the telling of Jesus resurrection is with the word, ‘but’. This means, if we are going to have a greater appreciation of what we are hearing, that we need to back up. So as you hear these verses that describe the events that take place on what we know as Good Friday (and to a much lesser extent, Holy Saturday), I invite you to consider the following: how do you respond to your plan not being able to take place? The scripture reads this way.

Luke 23:44-56

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’ ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

50 Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, ⁵¹had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁵⁴It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 24:1-12

Intro

The women knew where the body of Jesus had been laid, even to the point that they knew how his body had been laid in the tomb.

Let that sink in for a second: they knew how his body had been laid.

They went back to the place where they were staying (we are not told where, but we know that several of these individuals were from ‘out of town’). It is from this place that is ‘not home’ that they get ready, they get ready to prepare Jesus brutalized body.

'But...'

But when they go on the first day of the week, taking with them all that they had prepared, all that they knew to be true...wasn't.

Have you ever prepared only to realize that what you had prepared wouldn't actually be needed?

We make all sorts of preparations. We get ready in all sorts of ways. What God reminds us through these words, is that our preparations, when they are not walking in the fullness of the Savior, might not be the ways that God wants us to prepare. That doesn't mean that God can't use those ways or that the preparations weren't with the best of intentions (it is God after all!), but God's ways move in directions that we were not planning for. Do you view that in a positive or a negative light?

Said another way, whose kingdom are we looking to shine glory upon: God's or our own? The scripture reads this way.

Luke 24:1-12

24But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. 6Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' 8Then they remembered his words, 9and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

'(Re)discover Jesus: (You can) Trust the Promises'

The beginning of last week has, in so many ways, felt like it was consumed by media coverage of, and then the response of the world to, the fire at Notre Dame. In so many ways, it is utterly understandable. This is a place of worship that has been at the heart of one of the western world's most prominent cities for 850 years, becoming the backdrop for a myriad of religious, political, and cultural events. That reality, coupled with the fact that we live in a country that hasn't made it to 250 years yet, leaves us with a sense of Notre Dame's prominence and even permanence. I know as I watched the news reports, I kept hearing myself say, 'o no...'

And then it is horribly scarred. Not totally destroyed, but it received devastating damage...and people from all around the world are stepping up to make sure that it can be totally restored.

Again, I appreciate the importance of what Notre Dame stands for, and I believe that it is right for the government of France to look into what it's going to take to rebuild.

But...in its rebuilding, whose kingdom are we looking to shine glory upon?

I am sure that these thoughts would have been spinning around in my head regardless of when this fire would have happened.

But the fact that it happened during Holy Week has caused me to look at our reaction to Notre Dame in the shadow of Jesus journey to the cross and resurrection from the grave.

His life, his teachings, his death, his resurrection: all of it guides us to someone who radically flips our life on its head...if we're willing to really allow his message to begin to seep in through the casing of sin that we have had wrapped around us and absolutely have wrapped ourselves in.

How sealed are we in that sinfulness?

To the point that those who were closest to Jesus (his disciples, his family, his friends) were unable to hold on to the promise that he made again and again and again that he would undergo great suffering at the hands of the authorities, that he would be killed, and that after three days he would be raised again. Matthew 17:22, Mark 8:31, and Luke 9:22 are just three examples of the fact that such a promise was made (in each of these places Jesus says some variation of, 'he taught them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, be rejected by the elders and chief priests, be killed, and after three days rise again'). And none of that takes into account all of the miraculous things that he was able to do, to the point of actually raising other people from the dead.

He promised it.

And the promise was so well known, that we have the account in Matthew 27 where the chief priests go to Pilate and ask for some soldiers to guard the tomb because they wouldn't want their Roman leader to get in any trouble if the people actually believed that this rabble rouser Jesus did actually rise from the dead.

Jesus' disciples knew this. Jesus' family knew this. Jesus' friends knew this.

And yet they go to the tomb expecting to do what? To care for body.

That's why we started with the retelling of some of the events of Good Friday. Because the events of the world had convinced these very faithful followers that what they had been told couldn't possibly be true. A sin-filled world blinded them to the truth that God had promised through the radical Son of Man, that not even death could contain him.

And they went to the tomb prepared to respond in a way that was utterly appropriate for people who couldn't trust in God's truth. They went to show respect in a very human way. Were their preparations and action of heading to the tomb to follow through on those preparations, bringing glory to God?

Ultimately, the answer is yes, but that is only after all that they had prepared for was tossed to the side because the promise that had been made, the promise that they knew, the promise that they were unable to believe because of their grief and yes, sin-filled doubt,...happened!

Hear again, 'Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment'.

I do not know what you brought with you emotionally and spiritually into this place of worship this morning, but I have no doubt that there are a few of us are struggling to knock on the door that opens to the joy that is complete because what the world has thrown at us, and what we have claimed from the world as our own, leaves us feeling like the best that we can do is bring glory to ourselves and the wonders of the world, because the realities of God, well, at the very least, they don't seem to be true for us, so what's the point? Love God and neighbor as ourselves? How about we do the stuff that makes us feel like good people and every now and again get the religious attendance card punched and that'll be...good enough.

But that isn't the story of Easter is it?

Continuing in Luke, 'But on the first day of the week...(after some reminding from heavenly beings) they remembered Jesus words'.

Sons and daughters of the Living God, it is the first day of the week! We have again been able to be reminded of the promises of God. Remember! Believe! Knock on that door that brings glory to the Creator of all and His only begotten son Jesus Christ. You are the light of the world! Allow that light to shine!

There is nothing wrong with restoring a historic cathedral.

But it must not become the end in and of itself because if that is what it becomes, then it has become an idol and what we are preparing for is to bring recognition to that which is of humanity.

The Son of Man whispers aloud: 'trust in the promises that I have made. They are true. They will always be true. All that you know will pass away, and the kingdom that I have spoken of will continue on forevermore. Come! Be that whom you were created to be: you are the light of the world! And as you love me and my Father, as you care for your neighbors as I have shown you how (love always...no matter what), you will not only be preparing for my kingdom that is to come, but you will be giving all the glory back to God in the here and now. People will not understand it...and that's ok. Do it anyway! Show the world what it means to have your joy be made complete and they too will begin to (Re)discover who I have always been.'

People of God, it is the first day of the week! Let us be the light of the world. Let us not only prepare, but let us bring glory to God and God alone. And let us do it...right now!

After Sermon Prayer

Holy God, it is the first day of the week, and we are able to be reminded that the promises You have made through Your Son are true: he is risen! Lord, shake us from our doubt, fear, and sinfulness so that we might be able to (re)discover Jesus in our lives right now. Let us shine Your light by receiving it. God, let us knock on that door. Lord, let it be so. Amen.