

## DEVOTIONS: APRIL 13, 2020 ~ MONDAY AFTER EASTER

The Empty Tomb, Matthew 28:1-10

### HE IS RISEN!

**Matthew 28:1-10:** After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

<sup>2</sup>There was a **violent earthquake**, for **an angel of the Lord came down** from heaven and, **going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.** <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup>The **angel said to the women**, “**Do not be afraid**, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. **Come and see the place where he lay.** <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

<sup>8</sup>So the women hurried away from the tomb, **afraid yet filled with joy**, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly **Jesus met them.** “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. **Go and tell** my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Just a week before --- the disciples were basking in the afterglow of Jesus’ grand entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey --- **WHAT A DIFFERENCE A WEEK MAKES!** ---- we’ve experienced that haven’t we?

One week we are suspicious of COVID-19 --- a week later the stock market crashes, people are laid off from their employment, house isolation, and a killer virus --- we ask ourselves:

- **IS IT POSSIBLE? IS IT REAL?**
- **HOW CAN WE PROCESS ALL OF THIS CHANGE?** And
- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME? TO US?**

1. All the gospel accounts of the resurrection report that ‘the women’ were the first to arrive. AND in each account, when specific names were noted, Mary Magdalene was particularly noted. I wonder why?
2. There was a ‘violent earthquake’ --- Cornelius Lapidé is quoted, “The earth, which trembled with sorrow at the death of Christ, LEAPED for joy at the resurrection.”
3. Isn’t it neat that Matthew --- who is writing to a predominantly Jewish, Christian audience --- starts his telling of the ‘Jesus story’ with an ANGELIC message to Joseph (Matthew 1:20) and now, in his last chapter, Matthew again includes an ANGELIC message (Matthew 28:2-7)
4. Jesus DID NOT need the rock to be moved to overcome being locked in the tomb. **A GOOD REMINDER THAT JESUS CAN LIFT US UP AND OUT OF WHATEVER TOMBS OR CAVES THAT WE FIND OURSELVES IN --- OFTEN IN SOME OF THE MOST UNORTHODOX WAYS --- SO, WHEN YOU’RE TRAPPED, LOOK FOR SOME OF THE UNUSUAL AND UNORTHODOX WAYS THAT GOD MAY MAKE SOMETHING GOOD OUT OF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE!**

In verses 8-10 --- the women ENCOUNTER THE RISEN LORD!

- Jesus meets them as they are **in the context of life’s activities** --- Jesus meets us the same way
- Jesus GREETES US--- Jesus generally WELCOMES his children .... HAVE YOU FELT THE ‘WELCOME’ OF JESUS IN YOUR LIFE?

- When the women encountered Jesus --- they wanted to **HOLD HIM** and **WORSHIP HIM** --- **CAN YOU RECALL A TIME THAT YOU ENCOUNTERED JESUS AND JUST WANTED TO “HOLD” HIM AND “WORSHIP” HIM WITH TEARS AND PRAISES – THANKSGIVING AND GRATITUDE ---- I ENCOURAGE YOU TO SHARE ONE OF THESE TIMES WITH SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU.**
- **Again --- what does Jesus say?**
  - + **“GO”**
  - + **“TELL”**
  - + **AND a Promise --- “THEY WILL SEE ME”**

**MY SUMMARY** --- when life is most hectic and scary ... JESUS ALWAYS FINDS A WAY (often through the Holy Spirit or an ANGEL) TO BRING GOD’S PEACE --- GOD’S ASSURANCE --- and GOD’S COMMISSION

Dear God, THANK YOU for the LIFE-GIVING, LIFE-SAVING, LIFE-REDEEMING ministry and work of JESUS. Hearing the words, “HE IS RISEN” --- gives me hope, promise and a ‘spring-like’ expectation and possibility. THANK YOU GOD! Please help me to “GO,” “TELL,” and “ENCOURAGE” others to turn their lives to your care --- to LOOK TO YOU for their assuring promise and future. In Jesus’ name, AMEN.

## **DEVOTIONS: TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2020 ~ POST EASTER EXPERIENCES**

### **LUKE 24:13-35 THE ROAD TO EMMAUS**

The “Road to Emmaus” is one of my favorite “post resurrection encounters with Jesus.”

As best as I can tell --- per yesterday’s devotional, Jesus met the women as they left the empty tomb --- Mary Magdalene may have had a separate and more personal & individual encounter with Jesus (John 20:11-18) OR it may have been the same encounter per Matthew 28 --- just recounted by John with a different emphasis and specificity upon Mary Magdalene ---

AND THEN--- after these morning encounters with the women, we are told of 2 people (one is named Cleopas in verse 18 and the other unnamed, perhaps a spouse?), presumably from the ranks of Jesus’ followers, leaving Jerusalem and heading to Emmaus. We don’t know the time of day, BUT --- EMMAUS (most likely a village of about 800 people approximately 7-8 miles west of Jerusalem).

#### **Luke 21:13-35 Jesus encounters 2 pilgrims leaving Jerusalem for Emmaus**

Now that same day two of them were going to a **village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.** <sup>14</sup>They were talking with each other **about everything that had happened.** <sup>15</sup>As they talked and discussed these things with each other, **Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;** <sup>16</sup>**but they were kept from recognizing him.**

<sup>17</sup>**He asked them,** “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup>One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

<sup>19</sup>**“What things?” he asked.**

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup>The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup>but **we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.** And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup>In addition, **some of our women amazed us.** They went to the tomb early

this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen **a vision of angels**, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> **Then some of our companions went to the tomb** and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

<sup>25</sup> **He said to them**, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> **Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?**" <sup>27</sup> **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, HE EXPLAINED to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, **he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.** <sup>31</sup> **THEN their eyes were opened and they recognized him**, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he **talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?**"

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, "**It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.**" <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how **Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.**

### Understanding the Text and Context:

1. The last of the 3 Feasts is over --- so, naturally, people will begin to leave Jerusalem to travel back to their homes. 2<sup>nd</sup> --- these two travelers identified themselves as being with the disciples when the women came, told of their encounter with the empty grave and then a vision of an angel --- clearly, they were not concerned about any of the feasts at this point --- they were still trying to process Jesus' crucifixion ... to make sense ... clearly glazed over in disbelief ... and surprise --- CAN WE RELATE?
2. I don't know 'why' Jesus joined these two (as opposed to countless others or he did the gospel writers not know)--- but he did and they in turn, shared with the gospel writers so that we might be BLESSED BY THE ENCOUNTER 😊 ---
3. They DID NOT RECOGNIZE JESUS --(16) -- but then Mary Magdalene (the 1<sup>st</sup> to encounter the RISEN JESUS) did not recognize him at first either (John 20:11-18) -- HAVE YOU EVER FAILED TO RECOGNIZE SOMEONE, EVEN SOMEONE PRETTY CLOSE TO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW, BUT DON'T? WHAT ARE SOME REASONS WHY THEY MAY NOT HAVE RECOGNIZED JESUS?
4. Verse 16 tells us that they were "kept from recognizing him" --- WHY WOULD GOD KEEP THEM FROM RECOGNIZING JESUS? Whenever I see the obvious being overwritten by God --- I SHARPEN UP AND LOOK CLOSELY AT THE LESSONS THAT MAY FOLLOW --- THIS MIGHT BE GOOD! 😊
5. Verse 17 --- classic! JESUS ASKS A QUESTION --- Jesus often opens conversations with a question.
6. We see that these two disciples had HOPES (that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel (21) --- DO YOU SEE THAT THEY, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, WERE STUCK IN THEIR THINKING? THEY WERE SO CONSUMED BY THEIR OWN ORIENTATION THAT THEY DID NOT, COULD NOT, IMAGINE GOD'S HIGHER PRIORITY ---- NOT TO CONQUER ROME, BUT TO CONQUER SIN and its CONSEQUENCES !!!!!
7. KEY SECTION --- verses 25-27
  - LUKE CONTINUES THE THEME THROUGHOUT HIS GOSPEL --- THE IMPORTANCE OF "BELIEF" or "BELIEVING"
  - LUKE CONTINUES HIS THEME THAT JESUS IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH
  - LUKE HIGHLIGHTS THAT WE MUST NEVER GIVE UP "EXPLAINING" --- I know that I need to hear things multiple times before "I GET IT" ... WE MUST NEVER TIRE OF EXPLAINING AND HELPING

OTHERS TO SEE --- sooner or later --- with a sincere inquiry – and our effective, winsome explanation --- OTHERS WILL COME TO SEE AND TO UNDERSTAND!

- I love it --- “he EXPLAINED what was said in all the Scriptures” (vs. 27) --- Dear God, I do not know your Scriptures well enough --- help me to do better so that I might explain to others ....

8. Note the POWER of sharing a meal! (verse 29-30) – especially verse 30

- HE TOOK THE BREAD, GAVE THANKS (GAVE A BLESSING), BROKE IT, AND GAVE
- **SOUND FAMILIAR? Note what Jesus did at the last supper --- HE TOOK, HE BLESSED, HE BROKE and HE GAVE**

9. Verse 31 --- “THEN THEIR EYES WERE OPENED and they RECOGNIZED HIM” ---- WHEN JESUS TAKES WHAT HAS BEEN OFFERED --- and HE BLESSES WHAT HAS BEEN GIVEN --- (GIVING THANKS) --- HE BREAKS WHAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED --- AND MENDS ALL THE BROKEN WAYS and ALL THE BROKEN HEARTS --- JESUS IS THEN ABLE TO GIVE AND TO MULTIPLY --- TO GIVE LIFE!!!

10. A LIFE THAT IS REAL, A LIFE THAT IS INTERNAL, A LIFE THAT IS “ABUNDANT” (John 10:10)

11. AS WE COME TO REALIZE THE REALITY OF JESUS --- HE MOVES ON TO OTHERS

12. JESUS DEPENDS UPON US TO THEN TELL OTHERS --- TO “GO,” TO “TELL,” and “TO WITNESS”

POINT --- HAVE YOUR EYES BEEN OPENED?

HAVE YOU SEEN JESUS?

ARE YOU READY TO “GO” – TO “TELL” & TO “WITNESS” the love and grace of God in your life?

13. The disciples then went back to Jerusalem to tell the others --- are you ready and willing to “TELL THE OTHERS?”

***DEAR GOD, I PRAY THAT MY EYES BE OPENED THAT I MIGHT SEE YOU. I PRAY THAT I MIGHT THEN BECOME AN EFFECTIVE WITNESS --- SO THAT OTHERS MAY SEE YOU IN THE PAGES OF LIFE. DEAR GOD, I THANK YOU AND I PRAISE YOU. AMEN.***

## **DEVOTIONS: APRIL 15, 2020 ~ WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER JESUS VISITS THE DISCIPLES IN THE UPPER ROOM John 20:19-23**

**John 20:19-23** On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “**Peace be with you!**” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “**Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**” <sup>22</sup> And with that HE BREATHED on them and said, “**RECEIVE the Holy Spirit.**” <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

1. Jesus’ 3<sup>rd</sup> Resurrection Day encounter is with the gathering of disciples (it seems like the group only included the closest 10 --- Judas had taken his life and Thomas is absent) ... and the day is nearing its end.

2. Verse 19 reads, "... with the doors locked for FEAR ..." --- HAVE YOU EVER FELT FEARFUL? SO FEARFUL that you lock your doors and sat in a dark room --- perhaps, wrapped in a blanket? --- try to imagine FEARING FOR YOUR LIFE ---
3. EVEN WITH CREDIBLE REPORTS FROM THE WOMEN, MARY, THE 2 from the EMMAUS ROAD --- JESUS WAS ALIVE --- JESUS HAS BEEN SEEN --- HE EVEN VISITED WITH THESE OTHER WITNESSES --- YET, The disciples could not control themselves --- they were ANXIOUS & AFRAID --- even though they should have known better ... they truly believed that the religious leaders were looking for them --- to kill them ... and with this, the Roman guards were deployed to help the religious leaders accomplish this --- they felt that all the religious and political powers had targeted them ---

**MY WORD TO YOU TODAY** --- IS THE WORD THAT JESUS SHARED WITH THE DISCIPLES THEN --- AND TODAY!!!

**"PEACE BE WITH YOU"** .... And imagine JESUS STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU --- **"PEACE BE WITH YOU"** --- and your fear turns to PEACE --- and JOY .... Dear God, I pray your PEACE and YOUR JOY upon your disciples --- around the world, of course --- but especially upon the congregation and reach of SHUMC --- come upon us as we EACH have needs and concerns --- even anxieties and feelings of imposing doom --- "

Friends, we have people in our midst --- that are hurting even more than we might be --- I PRAY FOR THE CAPACITY OF EACH OF US --- NOT TO BE SHORT WITH ONE ANOTHER --- BUT TO BE EXTENDING --- TO BE CALMING --- TO BE ENCOURAGING --- TO BE PRESENT, AS JESUS WAS PRESENT WITH HIS DISCIPLES --- MAY WE BE PRESENT WITH THOSE WHO NEED A PRESENCE OF SOMEONE --- PERSONAL AND REAL --- ABLE TO BE SEEN & TOUCHED ...

Let me share with you the words of the Apostle Paul to his friends in Corinth, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, SO THAT we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*" 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

- As we allow ourselves to be comforted by Jesus --- by the Holy Spirit --- as we open ourselves TO RECEIVE the peace of the Holy Spirit --- may we comfort others
- We cannot pass on that which we do not ourselves have ---
- I pray that you may open yourself to the touch of God --- don't think too much --- breathe out all that you have breathed in from the world around you --- breathe OUT all of the smog --- all of the dirt --- all of the distorted images of the world --- and BREATHE IN the life and breath of JESUS.

### **Continuing our study of John 20:19-23**

4. KEY VERSE – verse 22: ***"And with that he BREATHED on them and said, "RECEIVE the HOLY SPIRIT."***

Many believe that while Pentecost (50 days in the future from this point) was the general explosion of the Holy Spirit upon all who believe --- THIS WAS THE TIME THAT JESUS GAVE THESE DISCIPLES HIS ABIDING, INDWELLING GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ---- regardless of this consideration --- here's the point --- JESUS BREATHED OUT TO SHARE --- TO GIVE THE DISCIPLES --- THE WONDERFUL BREATH OF DIVINE PRESENCE & LIFE.

And then what did Jesus say? Jesus told the disciples that they must RECEIVE ----

- The only way to "receive" is if we've breathed out the bad to make room for the good
- As you choose to breathe in the PEACE & PRESENCE OF GOD --- PLEASE REMEMBER TO "BREATHE OUT" first ---- and THEN conscientiously OPEN YOUR HEART, MIND, SOUL, and SENSES to the COMING IN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ---
- CAN YOU FEEL HIS PRESENCE COME INTO YOU? And TO BEGIN TO FILL YOU?

A KEY POINT: Jesus gives freely to all --- but do all of us open our lives to the touch of Jesus?

And then the end of this passage, Jesus continues to speak in verse 23, “ ... *If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*”

WHOOAAAAA!!!! What is going on here?

Here’s my explanation: Jesus is telling the disciples then (and us today) --- that with the fullness of the indwelling Holy Spirit we have divine, supernatural power --- to extend and spread the ministry of Jesus to others --- NOT AT OUR DISCRETION, but as JESUS WOULD DO --- Jesus always extended God’s reconciling and redeeming love and potential to ALL WHO EXPRESS FAITH and BELIEF in JESUS -- letting go of their agenda and their self-reliance ---- and turn to GOD --- RECEIVING GOD’S forgiveness ----

When we serve Communion --- we recite together our confession of sins and our faith in God – FATHER, SON, & HOLY SPIRIT ---- and when we are finished I often declare: “Hear the good news: Christ died for us, while we were yet sinners; that proves God’s love toward us. In the name of Jesus YOU ARE FORGIVEN!”

- I have not forgiven the sins --- God has through Christ’s death & resurrection --- BUT I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF SHARING THIS DIVINE ACT TO THOSE WHO HAVE PRAYED THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION & FAITH --- Pretty cool!!

Jesus has bestowed upon us --- upon all those who believe, particularly the church and pastors of today --- the PRIVILEGE of extending and sharing the GOOD NEWS of GOD’S forgiveness and acceptance and embrace --- not at our discretion, but according to God’s Word --- that all who believe will have eternal life!!! (See John 5:24 and John 6:40 as two of many validating Scriptures.) WOW!

Dear God, I pray your peace upon all those who have and who are turning to You during this anxious and fearful time. As you breathe Your Holy Spirit upon your church today --- may we, in turn, extend your presence, peace, and life upon all of those who cry out, “God, I believe” .... In Jesus’ name, Amen.