



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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PASTORAL MEDITATIONS



“But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; they you will see Him. See, I have told you.’”

Matthew 28:5-7

What does resurrection mean to you? We believe in the empty tomb because we know that Jesus was raised from the dead. We believe

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He appeared to many and that He spoke personally to His disciples and to others. We believe He ministered directly to His disciples as He continued to teach them through miracles and His ongoing presence with them. All of that is present in the concept of resurrection. But what does resurrection mean to you in your heart?

As Matthew continues on in his narrative about His immediate appearances after His resurrection we get several indications of what resurrection should mean to us. First it should mean transformation. If we look at v.8 we read of fear and great joy. When the women went to the tomb to finish the process of preparing Jesus' body for burial it was with heavy hearts and probably a lot of tears. The job they had ahead of them was going to be emotionally wrenching. But then they saw the angel, and they heard the angels' message, and their hearts were transformed. The women who left that tomb would never be the same again. They ran back to the disciples with fear (or in this case awe) and great joy. The heaviness in their hearts was gone. Their tears were dried up. Jesus was alive! If we go on to v.9 we find that the disciples who had been hiding in the upper room were also transformed. They were hiding because they feared what the Romans and the religious leaders would do to them since they had been very visible disciples of Jesus. Would they be chased down and killed also? That fear changed when Jesus stepped into their presence. Verse 9 talks about worship as they fall at Jesus' feet. He tells the disciples, "Do not be afraid any longer. Go to Galilee with all of My brothers, and there you will see Me again." Resurrection transforms us. It changes us forever. The situation the disciples found themselves in had not changed. It was their hearts that were different. Grief and fear and sorrows and troubles and pain are all replaced by awe and great joy and worship. That total change in our outlook and our perception of life is what resurrection should mean to us. We are not the same. We are to think and to live in that transformed way.

Matthew continues in vv.18-20 to tell us that resurrection gives us new purpose in our lives. This passage is commonly known as the Great Commission. What we often forget is how closely the Great Commission is tied in with resurrection. When the disciples arrived at Galilee to meet Jesus this is the message that He wanted them to hear. Their first response when they saw Jesus in Galilee was a continuation of their response in the upper room. Verse 17 tells us that they worshiped Him, even though some still couldn't wrap their heads around what had taken place. They knew Jesus died. How could He be standing before them. Still they moved beyond their doubts and fell at His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus gave them the most important message that everyone who has been transformed by the resurrected Jesus needs to hear:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...”

vv.19-20a

That command is bookended by two important promises and statements:

Verse 18, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.’” Then at the end of v.20 Jesus tells them, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus, our resurrected Savior, is now acting fully in His divine nature as God and is speaking in the full authority of the Father as He delivers this command. In other words, this is the most important responsibility that we have as transformed disciples. Our job is to make disciples. There is nothing more important for us to do than that. The promise is that we won't do it alone. Jesus was never the kind of leader who told people to do things and then left them to figure it out on their own. He was always intimately involved in the process.

This is no different. He promises that, as we go and make disciples, He will be with us and never leave us. We may be the ones who speak the words of the Great Commission, but Jesus is the power behind those words. Jesus is intimately involved in the process of transforming lives through our obedience. Resurrection means that we have new purpose. We have a job to do for our Savior, and He is calling for us to have a single-minded devotion to that new job. We are transformed disciples. Transformed disciples make new disciples. That's what resurrection means to us.

The final meaning of resurrection is found in Acts 1 as Jesus ascends into heaven. Jesus' final words to them are a reminder of their new purpose and His promise in Matthew 27:20. He tells them in Acts 1:8 that He will give them the supernatural power to fulfill their new calling:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The first time that command and promise are given are early after Jesus' resurrection. Forty days later that command and promise are Jesus' last words to them before He ascends into heaven. Don't ever lose the significance of what Jesus has said and when He has said it. The first words and the last words are the most important and they were deliberately delivered that way. The power of God resides within us and that means that no matter what we might face we can fulfill His calling. This is not a job we do in our strength. The Holy Spirit within us guarantees that our witness is filled with the power of God. We speak the words of the Gospel. God supplies the power and transforms hearts to follow Him. That's what resurrection means to us.

So, as we go forward from our Easter celebration, the challenge is to live as men and women who have been transformed by resurrection.

Fear is replaced by joy. Emptiness is replaced by worship. Aimlessness is replaced by purpose. Weakness is replaced by supernatural power.

Our greatest purpose is to make disciples. That's what resurrection should mean to us.

Blessings,
Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Discipleship meeting minutes

The discipleship team met at Brandon Valley Baptist Church on March 16, 2021. Present were Pastor Randy, Pam, 2-D, Theresa, and Erica. Erica opened with prayer. Discussion was made for dates of VBS to be held July 25th through July 29th. The material (already purchased from last year) will be on Jonah. A kick off puppet show will be during the children's moments on Sunday, July 25th. Erica will ask Brian and Jan to assist with some theme based background props. Advertising will be done through newspaper and fliers.

We decided to forego the children's singing during Palm Sunday opening this year. Instead palm leaves will be placed in vases in front of the church.

During Children's Church on Easter Sunday a special time of Bible teaching, crafts, and treats will be for those in middle school and younger.

Approximately 45 minutes will be allowed for the Easter presentation for the youth and young children. There will be no Sunday School on Easter Sunday with the regular church service starting at 9:00 that day. Summer Sunday School will be just the adult class and a class for the younger children with 2-D and other volunteers. This will allow the regular teachers a break during the summer months. Next meeting scheduled April 13, 2021 at 2pm at the church.

AWANA



Dear Awana families,

It is hard to believe, but our Awana year is quickly coming to an end. We will be having a regular club night this week. The children will be able to spend their Awana dollars that they have earned at the Awana store. This is always a fun time.

Our finale will be March 31st. You are invited to come at 6:30 for awards, a Gospel presentation, and ice cream. The children have worked really hard this year. As a group we have learned between 200 and 300 verses. I am so proud of each one of the children for all they have accomplished.

Thank you so much for bringing your children to club each week. It has been a privilege working along side you in ministering to them. See you on Wednesday!

Erica

Awana Ministry Director

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2021:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m., Worship Service

10:30 a.m., Fellowship

10:45 a.m., Sunday School for the Whole Family

Easter Sunday

7:30 a.m., Sunrise Service

8 a.m., Breakfast

9 a.m., Worship Service

Wednesday's

March 31, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Final Awana

Awana Clubs resume in the Fall

March 31, 7:45 p.m. - 8:45 p.m., 6th-8th Grade Youth Group

March 31, 7:45 p.m. - 8:45 p.m., 9th-12th Grade Youth Group

Beginning April 7, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., 6th-8th Grade Youth Group

Beginning April 7, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., 9th-12th Grade Youth Group

Thursday's

2 p.m., Prayer & Women's Bible Study at BVBC

6:30 p.m., Women's Evening Bible Study held at various homes

Saturday's

April 3, 8 a.m., Men's Bible Study on ZOOM

April 17, 8 a.m., Men's Bible Study on ZOOM

Friday, April 2, Good Friday

Sunday, April 4, Easter

Tuesday, April 13, 2 p.m., Discipleship Meeting at Church

MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



March 1, 2021

IT's ALL PART OF THE JOB...

Oh, the things I do for my middle schoolers!

This year I have taken on a new role. I don't really know what the official title is, maybe "Advisory Planner," though that doesn't really encompass all of what I do. We don't have a middle school counselor this year, so my coworker and I took on one aspect of that role, focusing on helping students who are struggling academically as well as planning our advisory meetings. It has been a fun and challenging role to play! It is so hard to help students who are in a different country and struggling and won't respond to emails or messages!

Advisory is something we started doing in middle school a few years ago, and it's somewhat like a homeroom class. The students are split into grade and gender groups and have a teacher as their leader. The purpose is for building relationships, having a teacher who can check in on students and mentor them, and also for helping students

grow as people. We have used a set curriculum in the past, but that curriculum isn't conducive to online learning. So, my coworker and I have been designing the curriculum this year.

Advisory has provided a place for students to build connections in a time where they are often still very isolated. It gives them a chance to grow spiritually, have fun, and get to know a group of their peers. We also have a friendly "Battle of the Squads" competition going on. After earning a certain amount of points, squads are able to "sandbag a teacher" - or make them do something ridiculous.

In the Philippines, children under the age of 15 still are not allowed out of their houses or out in public places except to exercise.

How this breaks my heart! Many of these kids have barely left their houses in the past year. They long for connection with others. One of the high school girls I am discipling asks almost every week for us to pray that we will have face-to-face school next year. She struggles with depression already, and being in quarantine for so long has made it worse. And there are so many others like these two students. God created us for community. In the very beginning, the first thing God said wasn't good was that man was alone (Genesis 2:18). We need others.

And so, we at Faith Academy are praying earnestly that we will be able to have in-person school next year. We are praying that the government will lighten restrictions and that vaccines will soon be available here (they are just starting to be available). Would you pray with us? Would you pray for my students who are stuck at home and are struggling to find motivation? Would you pray for those who are depressed? Would you pray that God would provide meaningful relationships for them while we wait for face-to-face school? Would you pray that God would use this time to draw them closer to Himself?

Thank you for your partnership with my ministry through your prayers. I know God hears them and uses them. I know someday

we'll look back on this time and see all the amazing things God was doing in it.

May God bless you richly.

And maybe see how fun it is to eat cake with your hands behind your back! ;) Send me a video if you do.

Amanda

Praises

- I have been able to find a good routine, now that I have been back in the Philippines for a few months and have had the first six-week block of school for the semester!

- More Faith Academy staff are returning! Quite a few arrived in the last week or so.

- We had the last week off of school as a break. It was a great time of rest, refreshment, and reconnecting for me.

Prayer Requests

- Pray that God would be close to those who are really struggling with the lockdowns and protocols due to Covid.

- Pray that God would provide the staff we need at Faith Academy for next year, and that they would be able to easily get into the country.

- Pray for continued wisdom and strength as I teach online and disciple four high-school girls.

MISSIONARY UPDATES

MARIJANA



March 4, 2021

Dear prayer people,

In just a few hours from now ZZ is organizing the First Ever Women's meeting in the Dp community, North Serbia. So many women are so excited about this and they are looking forward to coming and being part of it. After 3 years of us working in this community we are finally able to have them together at the same place and same time! This tells you a lot about the mistrust among the people in this community and we are praising God for this!

Another praise is that March 8th is next week and we decided to do this event today not knowing that Serbia is going to be in the lockdown (probability for that is 80%) from tomorrow! And yes, today we have good weather, and good temperature. Usually these days it is colder in Serbia and today it is going to be a higher temperature! We will organize this event outside because of the government's procedures

concerning Covid-19.

Please pray for this event. We will be talking about the possible topics they would like to talk about and work on in the future. We are planning on having this kind of event once a month (if possible).

Marijana and ZZ team Marijana Čizmanski “Zdrava zajednica” director

March 9, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Thank you so much for praying for this event that happened March 4th 2021.

As a team of 4 of us ladies we were able to serve the DP community and experience joy and happiness for being together with 80% of the Women from this community and almost all of the children (more than 25 kids).

We had an amazing opportunity to talk with ladies and share for the first time with all of them why we are in this community (to support them and help them develop as a community), to share our love and joy serving them.

We were also able to have a workshop and hear them and talk about their life situations.

Tamara and Jelena were able to work with kids

They were so happy we organized this kind of event and they would like to meet like this every month in the future. They expressed their interest in different topics to support each other, community and work on development.

As we were having fun and had a great time with them, men were standing around watching what we are doing. As I wanted to approach them and start a conversation they would leave (as I am a woman, a white person). This is showing us in one more way how important it is to have a male figure in our team. We are praying for this for a few years now. Please pray together with us for that person.

Also, this coming Thursday we will have for the first time a Bible school team and students joining us in our regular DP community visit. This year the Bible school director, Slađan Milenković and his team decided to fully support our work and join us in reaching unreached for Christ.

Blessings and much love from Marijana and ZZ team

PRISON MINISTRY NEWSLETTER



March 2021

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5
ESV*

Sometimes it can seem like the darkness is greater than the light of God in this world. We know this is not true even though our feelings can seem more real sometimes than God’s promises. We are in a spiritual war and that war takes place in our mind. God, in His Word, has given us ways to defeat the lies of the enemy. Ephesians 6:10-

18 is about putting on the whole armor of God. I Peter 1:13 says, "Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." We have a blessed hope that will never perish, fade, or spoil!

One of the men who I ministered to regularly for six months in segregation, was released from there into general population recently. He started attending the Monday evening Bible study and Thursday evening church. In Bible study we are studying Revelation where Jesus tells the churches to keep their priorities right. We have had some good discussions about returning to our first Love. He told me he appreciates the discussions. He said, "For six months it felt like I was in a spiritual coma and now it feels like I am coming out of it, and I am being spiritually revived. My desire now is to grow closer and go deeper with the Lord." It is great to see God at work in this man!

Dan, who I visited with a few years ago and was released, is back in prison for a short time. He told me that he was having problems with nightmares. Dan mentioned that three nights a week he was having the same bad dream. He went on to tell me that when he was 19 he told the devil he wanted wealth and all the material things Satan could give him. Dan said that the devil did give him all he wanted, but he was miserable the whole time. His fear was that God would not forgive him. We talked about that the only unforgivable sin is rejecting Jesus' offer of salvation. Dan repented and asked forgiveness for his dealings with Satan. Dan felt a relief and when I saw him a few days later, I asked him if he had anymore nightmares. He said, "No." Jesus gave him victory! The devil was keeping Dan in bondage by fear from his sinful past, but now he realizes the power of Jesus Christ, and has found peace with God!

Many of these young men behind the walls are dealing with a lot of emotional pain from broken homes. One told me that his mother is an alcoholic and he did not know his father. He started using drugs at

a young age to deal with life's issues. He did not have any guidance in his life. Please pray for these men to come to know our perfect heavenly Father!

Thank you for your support financially and through your prayers. You are a blessing!

In Christ, Harlan

SHAN REED - JAPAN



March 24, 2021

Thank you for continuing to pray for the ministry in Japan and for me and my family. My sister had a successful surgery and will start radiation soon. My mom's assisted living has reopened for family visitors so I have been able to see my mom in person. I am grateful for these answers to prayer for the health of my family.

Soli Deo Gloria, Shan

“The thought of You stirs us so deeply that we cannot be content unless we praise You, because You have made us for Yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You.” Augustine

RON & JEANNIE SECK - HUNGARY



Dear Prayer partners,

Thank you for continuing to pray for those still affected by Covid: Feri, Juli, Sandi and her children and for MEK and so many of these recent issues that need your prayers.

Please pray also for healing for three of CHE Central Europe's valuable team members:

Marija Maran, ZZ board member and volunteer for whom we prayed last year and God miraculously healed, now has both COVID and pneumonia.

This is very dangerous for her with her fragile lung and physical conditions.

Please pray for her husband Adrjan to be safe from the virus as he cares for her and works full time.

Emil Kisgeci has developed extreme back and leg pain that keeps him from much of the great outreach and discipling ministry through REZ Serbia in which he and Klara are involved. Please pray for the Lord to use the therapy and rest to strengthen and resolve the pain, and for his relief from the ongoing pain.

Sasha Cipra, long time leader of CHE ministry in Tusla, Bosnia area who has been greatly used by God in Roma communities. He is

sick with Covid, as well as his Mom (she also is battling cancer).

Please pray for their complete healing and for his older children to be kept from the virus and turn to the Lord, the Great Healer and Comforter.

Thank you for your prayers for these great partners in ministry.

Trusting together with you in the healing power and testimony of Jesus Christ,

Ron and Jeannie

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How To Give to North American Baptist Missionaries:

Step 1: Go to the NAB's new missions webpage **nabonmission.org**.

Step 2: Click on the “**missionaries**” label.

Step 3: Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

Step 4: Click on the “**give to..**” button on the national workers page.

Step 5: Fill out the form. All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**