**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 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 in 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