

Luke 24:33-49

April 15, '18

“PEAKS & VALLEYS”

IF I WERE TO ASK YOU TO NAME YOUR FAVORITE EASTER OR RESURRECTION STORY, I’M PRETTY SURE THIS WOULDN’T BE IT, WOULD IT?

THERE ARE SO MANY OTHERS THAT COME TO MIND, AREN’T THERE?

YOU’VE GOT PETER & JOHN RUNNING TO THE TOMB IN A MIXTURE OF FEAR & EXCITEMENT.

THERE’S THE STORY OF MARY MISTAKING JESUS FOR THE GARDENER & NOT RECOGNIZING HIM UNTIL HE CALLS HER BY NAME.

BOTH OF THOSE ARE FOUND IN JOHN’S GOSPEL AS IS THE STORY OF THE DISCIPLES FINDING JESUS ON THE SHORE AFTER A NIGHT OF FISHING – A CHARCOAL FIRE AWAITING THEM.

JOHN ALSO TELLS US THE STORY OF THOMAS IN THE UPPER ROOM & THE INCIDENT WE HEARD LAST WEEK – THE

**ONE WHERE THOMAS GETS THE DEROGATORY “DOUBTING”
ATTACHED TO THE BEGINNING OF HIS NAME.**

**MATTHEW TELLS US ABOUT THE GUARDS AT THE TOMB
SHAKING & FALLING OVER LIKE DEAD MEN & THE WOMEN
SEEING JESUS & HEARING HIM OFFER THEM A VERY
CRAFTILY-WORDED GREETING OF “GREETINGS!”**

**MARK GIVES US THE STORY OF THE WOMEN ON THEIR
WAY TO THE TOMB TO ANOINT THE BODY OF JESUS &
WONDERING WHO WOULD MOVE THE STONE FOR THEM
WHEN THEY GOT THERE – CLEARLY ACKNOWLEDGING THEY
HADN’T REALLY THOUGHT THIS THING THROUGH.**

**TO THEIR AMAZEMENT, IT WAS ALREADY ROLLED AWAY
& AN ANGEL WAS THERE TO GIVE THEM THE GOOD NEWS.**

**THESE ARE THE STORIES THAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE
EASTER & RESURRECTION STORIES, AREN’T THEY?**

BUT THIS ONE?

YOU CAN'T REALLY EVEN REMEMBER THIS ONE, CAN YOU?

BY THIS TIME, WE'RE ABOUT "EASTERED" OUT, THOUGH, AREN'T WE?

SERIOUSLY – EASTER WAS TWO WEEKS AGO!

IN TODAY'S WORLD OF MARKETING & QUICK-PACED CALENDAR TURNAROUNDS, WE'VE ALREADY MOVED ON, HAVEN'T WE?

IT'S TIME TO BE THINKING ABOUT OTHER THINGS – EARTH DAY, MOTHER'S DAY, MEMORIAL DAY, GRADUATIONS, PENTECOST & EVEN SUMMER VACATION.

BUT HERE WE ARE, WITH YET ANOTHER RESURRECTION STORY TO CONTEND WITH.

SOME OF YOU, THOUGH, ARE STILL THINKING OF THAT INITIAL QUESTION – THE ONE ASKING ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE EASTER STORY.

**THOSE OF YOU WHO WERE FOLLOWING ALONG CLOSELY
WERE WAITING FOR ANOTHER ONE, WEREN'T YOU?**

**I DIDN'T EVEN MAKE MENTION OF AN EASTER STORY
THAT – FOR MANY OF YOU – IS CLEARLY YOUR FAVORITE.**

**I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE ONE WE KNOW AS
“THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.”**

**YOU REMEMBER THAT ONE, DON'T YOU – IF, FOR NO
OTHER REASON, THE BEAUTIFUL PAINTINGS OF THE EVENT IT
EVOKES IN YOUR MIND.**

**TWO DEJECTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS MEET HIM ON THE
DAY OF THE RESURRECTION ON THEIR WAY HOME TO THE
LITTLE VILLAGE OF EMMAUS.**

**THEY AREN'T AWARE THAT IT'S JESUS UNTIL THEY
CONVINCE HIM TO COME IN FOR A MEAL AND – AS LUKE
TELLS US IN RECOUNTING THE STORY – *“THEIR EYES WERE
OPENED AND THEY RECOGNIZED HIM.”***

I WANTED TO SAVE THAT ONE FOR LAST BECAUSE THAT STORY IS PART OF TODAY’S.

WHEN LUKE SAYS, IN THAT FIRST VERSE YOU HEARD, “*THAT SAME HOUR THEY GOT UP & RETURNED TO JERUSALEM...*” – THEY REFERS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES IN EMMAUS.

THIS IS THE FOLLOW-UP TO THAT STORY.

REMEMBER, THESE TWO DISCIPLES – CLEOPAS & HIS COMPANION (PERHAPS HIS WIFE) - MET JESUS ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION.

SO THEY HURRY BACK TO JERUSALEM “*THAT SAME HOUR*” TO SHARE WITH THE OTHERS THEIR ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS.

EVERYONE IS GATHERED TOGETHER – ALL OF THEM FILLED WITH A PLETHORA OF EMOTIONS, RANGING FROM FEAR TO CONFUSION – FROM DOUBT TO EXCITEMENT.

AND SUDDENLY, WHO IS IN THEIR VERY MIDST BUT JESUS HIMSELF.

EVERY ONE OF THESE STORIES – EVERY ENCOUNTER THAT MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE & JOHN SHARE - IS A SEPARATE & UNIQUE ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN CHRIST.

AND EVERY ONE OF THEM SPEAKS OF THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION & YET, AT THE SAME TIME, ITS MYSTERIOUSNESS.

THIS STORY IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THAT COMBINATION OF REALITY & MYSTERY.

FOR STARTERS, HERE THEY ARE – ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE – MOST LIKELY THE UPPER ROOM WHERE THE LAST SUPPER HAD BEEN SHARED JUST THREE NIGHTS BEFORE – AND SUDDENLY, JESUS IS STANDING RIGHT THERE WITH THEM.

THIS IS VERY MYSTERIOUS!

IT'S A STORY TINGED WITH HUMOR IF YOU CARE TO READ IT THAT WAY.

FOR EXAMPLE, JESUS SAYS, *"WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?"*

I CAN IMAGINE THE DISCIPLES LOOKING AT ONE ANOTHER AND THEN ONE OF THEM – PROBABLY PETER – SAYS, *"I DON'T KNOW, JESUS. COULD IT BE THAT THE LAST TIME WE SAW YOU, YOU WERE BEING TAKEN DOWN FROM A CROSS – BLOODY, BEATEN & AS DEAD AS DEAD CAN BE!?! YOU THINK THAT MIGHT DO IT?!"*

BUT THEN JESUS TELLS THEM TO LOOK AT HIS HANDS & HIS FEET & THEN ASKS – AND YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE SOME FUN WITH THIS ONE – *"HEY, YOU GUYS GOT ANYTHING TO EAT AROUND HERE?"*

HERE AGAIN, HE'S SHOWING THE PROOF OF HIS LITERAL RESURRECTION!

EVEN LUKE MAKES THIS CLEAR BY TELLING US VERY SPECIFICALLY WHAT THEY GAVE HIM.

IT WASN'T JUST FOOD.

IT WAS FISH.

AND IT WASN'T JUST FISH.

IT WAS BROILED FISH.

THE POINT IS, THIS IS A MOMENT THE DISCIPLES WOULD REMEMBER IN ALL OF ITS SPECIFICITY FOREVER!

BUT THIS CLEARLY IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS IT ALL SEEMS.

LUKE MAKES A GREAT STATEMENT HERE THAT, I BELIEVE, SUMS UP – NOT JUST THE DISCIPLES REACTION TO THE *RESURRECTION* – BUT THEIR REACTION TO EVERYTHING THEY EXPERIENCED WITH JESUS.

HE SAYS, “*WHILE IN THEIR JOY THEY WERE DISBELIEVING & STILL WONDERING...*”

WHAT A CASCADE OF EMOTIONS THEY WERE EXPERIENCING!

JOY, DISBELIEF & WONDER ALL AT THE SAME TIME!

**YOU CAN GO BACK SEVERAL MONTHS WHEN WE LOOKED
AT THE STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION.**

**YOU HAD PETER, JAMES & JOHN WITH JESUS ON THE TOP
OF THE MOUNTAIN.**

AND THEY LEFT TO RETURN TO THE VALLEY.

**THROUGHOUT THE SEASON OF LENT, WE FOLLOWED
JESUS & THE DISCIPLES FROM THE PEAKS TO THE VALLEYS.**

THEY WERE UP – AND THEN THEY WERE DOWN.

**THEY WERE EMBOLDENED – AND THEN THEY WERE
HUMBLED.**

**THEY FELT LIKE THEY WERE ON TOP OF THE WORLD ONE
MINUTE & IN THE ABYSS OF HELL IN THE NEXT.**

AND ISN'T THAT TRUE OF LIFE AS WELL?

**WE FIND OURSELVES ALTERNATELY ON PEAKS &
VALLEYS OF EXISTENCE.**

**WE EXPERIENCE THE HIGHS & LOWS, THE GOOD TIMES &
BAD.**

I THINK THAT'S A BIG PART OF THE MESSAGE WE CAN TAKE AWAY FROM THIS PARTICULAR EASTER STORY WE'VE LOOKED AT TODAY.

YOU SEE, THERE WAS A STRONG BELIEF AT THAT TIME THAT THERE WAS A SEPARATION BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD & THE PHYSICAL WORLD.

THINGS OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD WERE GOOD & THINGS OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD WERE BAD.

THE THOUGHT WAS THAT THE GOAL OF LIFE WAS TO RISE ABOVE & ABANDON THE PHYSICAL WORLD & ENTER THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

THE NOTION WAS THAT FLESH WAS EVIL & THEREFORE GOD WOULD NOT BECOME FLESH & BLOOD IN A PERSON BECAUSE THE MATERIAL AND PHYSICAL WORLD WERE INFERIOR TO THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

THIS IS WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT FOR LUKE & THE OTHER GOSPEL WRITERS TO REAFFIRM THE HUMANITY OF JESUS.

IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE COUNTERING AN ARGUMENT THAT SAYS THE WORLD & HUMAN FLESH ARE EVIL AND INFERIOR & THE GOAL OF LIFE IS TO RISE ABOVE THE WORLD AND EVENTUALLY ESCAPE THIS WORLD & ENTER THE CALM OF THE SPIRIT.

I THINK THAT'S WHY JESUS TELLS THE DISCIPLES HERE TO LOOK AT HIS HANDS & HIS FEET.

WHY DOESN'T HE SAY, "*LOOK AT MY FACE AND MY ARMS?*"

IT'S BECAUSE HIS HANDS & HIS FEET HAD BEEN PIERCED BY THE NAILS THAT SECURED HIM TO THE CROSS.

IT'S BECAUSE HE WANTS THEM TO KNOW THAT THIS IS LIFE & HE'S EXPERIENCED IT.

YOU SEE, LUKE WANTS TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE PHYSICAL, EARTHLY, FLESH & BLOOD WORLD IS REAL & VALUABLE.

FOR US TO AFFIRM THE RESURRECTION IS NOT TO AFFIRM THAT JESUS IS TAKEN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

LUKE PUTS THE RISEN CHRIST RIGHT BACK INTO THE WORLD.

“SEE MY HANDS & FEET & TOUCH ME.”

JESUS IS TELLING THE DISCIPLES – HE’S TELLING US – THAT HIS LIFE – LIKE OURS – IS FILLED WITH NAIL HOLES & SCARS.

HE’S TELLING US THAT HE’S WITH US IN THE PEAKS & VALLEYS OF OUR EXISTENCE.

HE’S TELLING US THAT TO BE HUMAN – TO BE ALIVE – IS TO EXPERIENCE BOTH.

I LOVE THE TRUTH OF THE OLD SAYING, *“IF ALL WE HAD WAS SUNSHINE, WE’D BE LIVING IN THE DESERT.”*

SOME OF YOU MAY REMEMBER AN OLD HOMER & JETHRO SONG, “THAT’S GOOD – THAT’S BAD” WHERE THE TWO COMEDY SINGERS GO BACK & FORTH WITH THE STORY OF LIFE.

**SOMETHING THAT SOUNDS BAD TURNS OUT TO BE GOOD
& THEN THE SOMETHING THAT SOUNDS GOOD TURNS OUT TO
BE BAD.**

**ON & ON THE SONG GOES, BUT WHEN IT ENDS – CREEPILY,
I MIGHT ADD – IT FINALLY ENDS WITH SOMETHING GOOD.**

SO IT IS WITH LIFE.

THERE ARE THE UPS & DOWNS.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THE PEAKS & THE VALLEYS.

**BUT WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES IN THE VALLEYS, WE
CAN BE ASSURED THAT CHRIST IS STANDING WITH US.**

**HE'S SAYING, "*LOOK AT MY HANDS & MY FEET. I
UNDERSTAND & I'M RIGHT HERE WITH YOU.*"**

**BUT REMEMBER – WHEN HE SAID IT TO THE DISCIPLES &
WHEN HE SAYS IT TO US – HE'S WALKED THROUGH THAT
VALLEY & HE'S STANDING ON THE OTHER SIDE.**

**HE ASSURES US THAT, IN THE END – ON THE OTHER SIDE
OF WHATEVER VALLEY WE FIND OURSELVES INHABITING, WE
TOO WILL FIND OUR WAY TO NEW LIFE.**

**THAT NEW LIFE ISN'T JUST FOUND IN ETERNITY – IT'S
FOUND HERE & NOW IN THE REAL WORLD OF PEAKS &
VALLEYS. AMEN.**

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