

“Being Humble”

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18

Easter Sunday. Resurrection of the Lord Sunday. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. We celebrate this day that Jesus rose from the dead, accomplishing forgiveness, rebirth and God’s saving power for humanity. Do you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead?

In April 2002, Oxford University philosophy professor Richard Swineburne used a broadly accepted probability theory to defend the truth of Jesus’ resurrection. In a *New York Times* interview, Swineburne said, “For someone dead for 36 hours to come to life again is, according to the laws of nature, extremely improbable. But if there is a God of the traditional kind, natural laws only operate because he makes them operate.” Swineburne used Bayes Theorem to assign values to things like the probability that God is real, Jesus’ behavior during his lifetime and the quality of witness testimony after his death. Then he plugged the numbers into a probability formula and added everything up. What did Swineburne discover: a ninety-seven percent probability that the resurrection really happened.¹

I am on solid ground when I assert people are looking for something today. Whether it is hope, peace, joy or love, people are looking for something. There is so much going on in our world. I’m really focused on the matter of racial injustice and the

¹Some aspects of this paragraph were adapted from an article in *Group Magazine* (July 2002).

need for reconciliation. As one who comes from the majority white culture, I want my life to matter in the significant conversation going on now about race. In this regard,

Latasha Morrison, author of *Be The Bridge*, our resource book for this series, writes,

If you're White, if you come from the majority culture, you'll need to bend low in a posture of humility. You may need to talk less and listen more, opening your heart to the voices of your non-White brothers and sisters. You'll need to open your mind and study the hard truths of history without trying to explain them away. You'll need to examine your own life and the lives of your ancestors so you can see whether you've participated in, perpetrated, or benefited from systems of racism.²

Understanding the racial divide begins with the right posture, that being humility.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24, Acts 10:34-43 and John 20:1-18 proclaim that whatever seems death-dealing and life defeating loses. Love wins.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 proclaims that death loses. God does not give us up to the death-dealing and life defeating experiences or forces. Psalm 118:14 reads "The LORD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation."

Acts 10:34-43 asserts that God shows no partiality. Everyone, regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness. The gospel is inclusive. Acts 10:35 reads, "...in every nation anyone who fears him [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him [God]."

John 20:1-18 focuses on Mary's search for hope, peace, joy and love. Mary went to anoint Jesus' body, a tradition of Jewish burial. Yes, with some skepticism, but still searching. The stone had been rolled away. The tomb was empty. Immediately she ran to Simon Peter and John and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't

²Latasha Morrison, *Be The Bridge* (WaterBrook, 2019), 7-8.

know where they have put him!”³ Mary, Simon Peter and John ran back to the tomb. John 20:5-7 reads, “He [John] bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth had been folded up by itself, separate from the linen.” Simon Peter, John and Mary believed that Jesus’ body had been removed. John 20:9 reads, “They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.” Simon Peter and John returned to their homes, but Mary remained outside the empty tomb. She wept. Had the Roman guards stolen the body to mock Jesus publicly in the streets? Did some of the disciples take Jesus’ body to make it look like he had risen from the dead? Had she gone to the wrong tomb? Had Jesus only fainted on the cross, later waking and walking out of the tomb? Two angels appeared to Mary. They asked Mary why she was crying. She turned around and there was Jesus. John 20:15-18 reads,

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Nobody unwrapped the linen from Jesus’ body. God commanded Jesus to rise up from the grave. The Father breathed life into the Son, Jesus. Jesus left death behind just like the linen shroud was left behind.⁴

³John 20:13

⁴In the four paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of Eric Wall, Joel B. Green, Pamela S. Saturnia, Jonathan L. Walton and Thomas G. Long in Joel B.

The message of Easter is this: whatever you're searching for to provide meaning in your life that search is over. The tomb is empty. Jesus came to earth for you. Jesus was baptized for you. Jesus was obedient for you. Jesus was fully God and fully human for you. Jesus suffered for you. Christ died for you. Jesus was resurrected from the dead for you. Reconciliation is possible for every human, with God and one another. Again, Latasha Morrison writes, "God is inviting all of us to be active participants in racial reconciliation, to show the world that racial unity is possible through Christ...I pray you'll join a movement of bridge builders who are fighting for oneness and unity, not uniformity, in 'such a time as this.'"⁵ Be humble. Trust that the very things you are looking for, you cannot make happen. You need the empty tomb, the resurrected Jesus and love's victory over death to infuse your life with hope, peace, joy and love."

For what are you looking? If hope, peace, joy and love, then look no further. Look to the empty tomb. Accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord right now. Renew your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord right now. The empty tomb is God's conduit through Jesus for you to receive hope, peace, joy and love. You can become the conduit for others to receive the very things you now have...hope, peace, joy and love. That's right. Be humble. Be reconciled to God and others. This is the miracle of Easter. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Easter Sunday, 04 April 2021
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Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 2* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 183-184, 185-187, 187-189, 190-192 and 192-194.

⁵Latasha Morrison, *Be The Bridge*, 9.