

 **Main Street**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Matthew 28:1-8, 9-10
“Looking Over The Edge”

April 20, 2014
(Easter/ The Resurrection of the Lord)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

MATTHEW 28:1-8, 9-10 "LOOKING OVER THE EDGE"

A') 28:1-8 EMPTY TOMB AND WOMEN WITNESSES.

//Mk. 16:1-8, Lk. 24:1-11

1) v.1 Women Go To The Tomb With One World View: Jesus Is Dead.

Females Were Normally Considered Unreliable Witnesses, Gal. 3:28

Jewish Custom: Watch Tomb Till Third Day, m. Semahot 8:1

1 Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday),

Omits Dialog Of Mk. 16:3-5

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre.

//Mt. 13:55, Continuity: 27:55-56, 61 Burial

See Cross/Burial/Empty Tomb/Angel/Jesus

Video!

2) vv.2-4 "And behold," Revelation By An Angel.

Angels = Agents Of Divine Revelation

The Other World Intrudes Into This One

2 And behold,

2 Witnesses: 1) Earthquake/Angel, 2) Jesus Himself

there was a great earthquake (seismos);

Apocalyptic Event, Old World Shaken (8:24, 24:7, 27:51, 28:2)

for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven

//1:20-21, 2:13-19, Birth/Resurrection

and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it./

27:60, Symbol Of Triumph Over Death

3 His appearance was like lightning,

17:2, How Angels Appear, Dan. 7:9, 10:6, 1 Enoch 14:20, 71:1

and his raiment white as snow.

27:54, 28:11-15, Typical Reaction

4 And for fear of him

Angels As Interpreters Of God's Actions

the guards trembled (were shaken, eseisthesan) and became like dead men.

Irony: Jesus Lives

Dan. 12:1-3, 2 Macc. 7, Is. 26:19, On Resurrection

3) vv.5-7a The Resurrection Message For Them And Others.

Resurrection Not Described, contra. Gospel of Peter 9:35-10:42

Audio!

5 a But the angel said to the women,

All Of This To Female Witnesses!

Comfort "Do not be afraid;

Typical Response To Angelophany/Theophany

Understanding for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

Marks Remain, Crucified/Dead/Buried/Risen

Event = Resurrection (Alive) + Exaltation (With God)

6 b He is not here;

Material Resurrection; Corpse Gone! 1 Cor. 15:14

Good News for he was raised, as he said.

Passive Voice, 12:40, 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:18-19, //26:32, 4:15

Vindication, Ages Shift, Kingdom Broken Into History

Verification b' Come, see the place where he lay.

Empty Tomb Verified, Only One Raised!

Reverses Shame Of The Cross, Assures Atonement

7 a' Then go quickly and tell his disciples

26:32, Missionaries, First Preachers Of Resurrection

Mission that he has risen from the dead,

Second Emphasis On Resurrection, Epistles To Apostles

1 Cor. 15:4-5, Rom. 1:3-4, 4:25, 8:11, = Center Of Early Preaching

2') v.7b "And behold": Revelation Of The Risen Jesus Is Promised In Galilee.

Promise

1 and behold,

2 he is going before you to Galilee;

26:32, Jn. 21, Galilee of the Gentiles, First Step To Entire World

2' there you will see him.

Keep Moving! Promise Of Resurrection Appearance, 28:16-20

1' Lo (behold), I have told you."

Angels Speaks For God

1') v.8 Women Go Obediently From The Tomb With Another World View: Jesus Is Alive!

Report Of Empty Tomb Came From Women, Not Respected As Witnesses

8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy,

Intense Emotions, Joy Like Magi (2:10)

and ran to tell his disciples.

Obedience To v.7, Mk. End With Fearful Silence

Angelophany (vv.1-8), Christophany (vv.9-10)

Lines Of Evidence: 1) Women, 2) Empty Tomb, 3) Appearances, 4) Fulfilled Promises, 5) Changed Lives, 6) World Mission

1) v.9 First Encounter Of The Women With The Risen Christ And Worship.

9 And behold Jesus met them and said, "All Hail!" (All Rejoice!) 26:49, Appears To Obedient! //Jn. 20:11-18 (7 Pts.)

Video!

And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

Deity, Worship Only God, 28:16-20, 2:1-12 Magi

Confirms Angel, No Fantasy: Corpse Transfigured, Touchable

Audio!

2) v.10 Mission Speech: Go And Tell The Brethren (Evangelize The Church!).

10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid;

Repeats vv.7-8, Promise, Forgiven/Restored

go and tell 'my brethren' to go to Galilee,

12:46-50, Jn. 15:11-17, Test Of Obedience, Follow Women?

and there they will see me."

Most Spectacular Of Biblical Miracles, Same Jesus, New Mission

Appearance To Them Not In Galilee But Immediately Follows Appearance: Recognition + Mission

LOOKING OVER THE EDGE

“He is not here, for he was raised, as he said...”

The first dizzying glimpse of a whole new world.

M A T T H E W 2 8 : 6

It was April Fool's 1984 that something happened to Dr. Gary Hamlin of Joplin, Missouri. In his own words, he became *a fool for Christ*, “I lived the first 40 years for personal gain, but as I became obedient to God, he opened my eyes to people.” Hamlin soon co-founded a Teen Challenge center offering free counseling and care for young people on drugs, some of whom stayed in his home. When no other doc volunteered, Hamlin became the first medical director of the AIDS Project of the Ozarks. A facility for battered women also engaged his services, for free!

On April 1, 1988, Hamlin opened the Benevolent Clinic. Any who need care receive it; no one is turned over to collections, and 35 to 45 come each Friday. Hamlin moonlights every other weekend in the hospital to help with the overhead. “Luke 14:14 introduced me to the founding principle for the clinic,” he says, “It was God's promise to me, 'And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed *at the resurrection of the just.*'” In 1992 he entered a congressional race and finished third out of six as a novice. His platform to “plead the cause of the poor and needy” is from Proverbs 31:9.

Since his first visit to Haiti in 1989, Hamlin admits, “materialism has lost its value. Before I went, I carried a lot of fears: fear of dying, fear of financial hardship. After awhile, the fears began to dissipate. God was weaning me from the world's attractions and showing me his vision for my life- to be a fool for him every day.”¹

Life as mission, drinking the deep wells of compassion, a keen sense of social justice and political responsibility, a weaning from old obsessions and a withering of old fears, willing to be thought foolish: where does such come from?

¹ PreachingToday.com search under Mt. 28:1-10.

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The church has an answer. We've know exactly where it comes from. It's from the resurrected Jesus who's always on the look out for a few new fools to be infected with the divine life which looks crazy to those who have only maps of the old world and know only the old way of seeing.² But once you've been shown a glimpse of a new world and the One who makes it possible, it's time for new life in the midst of the wreckage of an old world. And because you now see differently, you can begin to act differently, as some might say- *to act the fool, a fool for Christ*. No longer are you bound by conventional thinking; you now find more joy in the companionship of Christ than others do in the good life otherwise defined. For Hamlin it was April Fool's 1984, for me July 5, 1972, for John Wesley May 24, 1738. Jesus is alive, even more than before because he's now not limited by space and time. Then he could interact only with only one person at a time; he can now touch anyone at any time. "Hey, want to become a holy fool? Follow me. Want to be a part of what I'm doing to preview God's new world? Follow me."

It's why Jesus was so attractive to some and repellant to others. He was God's visionary, God's court jester, God's invitation to mock the way the world is presently organized. At one pole attraction, at the other repulsion; receptivity for some, resistance for others; follow him as a holy fool or label him a dangerous fool who's better off dead, "and the sooner the better" as some said his last week in Jerusalem.

To follow Jesus was to do something many considered dangerous and foolish.³ Leave village and family? Leave the predictability of social roles to follow an upstart prophet around the countryside and back and forth to Jerusalem? Risk being thought a religious nut-case?⁴ Simon he named *Peter*, meaning *rock*. James and John he nicknamed *Boanerges*, the thunder boys. Then there was Mary of Magdala from whom Jesus cast seven demons. Rocky, the Thunder Boys and the Demon Lady! Sounds more like a rock band or biker gang than a holy club!

² For a biography of one of our premier fools, see Donald Spoto, *Reluctant Saint: The Life Of Francis Of Assisi* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2002).

³ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), Chapter 6, "The Jesus Movement," 98-121, and his more technical work, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995).

⁴ This is the clear implication of Mark 3:1, 31; Jesus' family thought him insane.

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They did life together for three years, and in the process were reshaped by who he was and what he taught. In Jesus the kingdom and rule of God the Father took up residence and walked around in the power provided by God the Spirit. Love now had a face and a tone of voice, a shoe size and a big smile. Being around Jesus was like living in a dream world, a front row seat on what was possible with God now operating locally at ground level. It was hard to believe this stuff was really happening; Jesus consistently bewildered people, and they asked, “Who is this?”

With him there was no pretense, no posturing, just love with a *capital L* and truth with a *capital T* and power with a *capital P*. And somehow, along the way, his and their needs were provided for. There was always enough because there are no shortages in the warehouses of his Father’s kingdom. People gave; hospitality was rarely a problem. What they did made a way for them; at least some folk in most of the villages were glad they were there because grandma could walk again and their leprous cousin was made clean. And when many were offended because his words were hard, and when he asked his closest followers, “Do you also wish to go away?” it was Peter who admitted he was hooked on being a holy fool, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...”⁵ Better to be foolish with Jesus than to be sane and well-adjusted elsewhere. A deep bond of friendship was formed, but that attachment was about to be tested.

In short order the dream became a nightmare. The king and his kingdom suddenly collapsed. In rapid succession Jesus was sold out by a friend, captured in the garden, hauled off by police, man-handled by authorities, interrogated and mocked, clubbed and scourged, stripped and nailed on a public cross as an example of how not to behave in a world run by Jewish leaders and Roman officials. “This is what we do with holy fools,” was the clear message of church and state together.

What had begun so well in Galilee ended poorly in Jerusalem. The show was over, “What we experienced, was it real? Or just a fancy and a fraud?” It’s what people ask when a romance goes sour or a dream that seemed so sure is crushed. How could this happen?” But it did, and when the women who stood at a distance saw Jesus placed in the tomb and the stone wedged into place, it was now officially over. The powers that threatened him all along did him in. It was fun while it lasted,

⁵ John 6:67-68.

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but the powers of Rome and Jerusalem win; the dominating powers of the world throttled our man and his message. How could we have been so foolish? He's dead now, and as Woody Allen said, "Death is absolutely *stupefying in its terror*, and it renders anyone's accomplishment meaningless."⁶

Stupefying in its terror: now there's an apt phrase for how the band of holy fools felt Friday evening. Bruised, numb, bewildered. The women having to tell the guys in hiding what happened, how long it took Jesus to die, who buried him and where. It's how soldiers feel after an ambush or when they see the truck just ahead hit an improvised explosive device. Things are fine one minute, hellish the next. Their future died with Jesus. The best they could hope for was to slink back to Galilee with returning pilgrims and see if the old life could be put back together.

"How could we have been so wrong? It was an extreme case of what psychologists label *cognitive dissonance*. There was first the old life before Jesus came along, village life according to the common script of the day, basically *know your place, keep it, and hope for the best*. Then there was life with him for several years as understudies, a script no one ever lived before- pretty exciting stuff. Then this sudden, horrible end. Why had the One he called *Abba/Father* let him die this way? Was the God of Israel a cosmic trickster now laughing in the heavens at their foolish faith? Two contradictory and intolerable ideas in the same head and heart: cognitive dissonance. What happened to Jesus was brutal to his body and brutal to their psyches. Jesus was dead and his followers a disaster area. We call it PTSD: post-traumatic stress disorder. Which world is the real one? That one or this one? Three years of wondrous power and life, or one day of gruesome death?

TURNING TO THE TEXT

1) v.1 Two At The Tomb.

As a pastor I've observed the power of cemeteries. One of our first churches- Bethel, was beside the parsonage, and behind the church was a cemetery with a wall of blue granite. Cars would drive up, several people tumble out- one carrying flowers. They would go to a grave, stand there for a time, a mother telling her children about a grandmother they never met. I've seen them bring picnics and eat there. Saturdays

⁶ PreachingToday.com search under Matthew 28:1-10.

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before Easter and Mother’s Day were the heaviest traffic. Sometimes I’d introduce myself and hear about their rural roots in Fairfield County. To take such a pilgrimage is to be flooded with memories, not all of them pleasant. At times I’ve written pastoral prescriptions for people to go stand at a grave, and there to either ask for or grant forgiveness. And if it’s too far away, to write a letter to the dead. The dead, it seems, continue to influence the living. They are dead, but they are not gone.

Had Jesus died in Nazareth of accident or illness, family and friends would have carried out the rituals of burial and mourning- some of which lasted several days at the burial site. But Jesus died far from home and was buried in a borrowed tomb. And that is where we find two devoted women early on Sunday: Mary of Magdala and *the other* Mary, likely Jesus’ mother.⁷ A brief report is found in verse 1, “Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre.” They wanted to be near Jesus’ remains and honor him with the rituals of grief. It was an act of post-mortem devotion, like going back to a grave the day after the service. People do it all the time. Stand by the fresh mound of dirt, straighten up the flowers, cry a bit and talk to the dead.

When people live together, and especially if there’s genuine affection between them, they learn the details of each others lives. And if some share the same names, you have to find a way to distinguish them. There was Mary of Magdala and *the other* Mary. There was James the brother of John and James the son of Alphaeus, Simon nicknamed Peter and Simon the political Zealot, and two named Judas- one of whom spent the rest of life saying, “No, I am not the other guy. He’s dead!”⁸

But it was Mary of Magdala who had the most revealing designator. She was known as the *Mary out of whom Jesus cast seven demons*.⁹ Her name in Aramaic: *Miriam*. Her village: *Magdala*. Then a summary of what happened when Jesus crossed her path: *seven demons had gone out*. I wish we had the story of that

⁷ See Matthew 13:55.

⁸ See Luke 6:12-19, 8:1-3 for lists of names with designations.

⁹ Luke 8:2 // Mark 16:9.

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encounter, but we do not.¹⁰ What would it be like to be filled with torment one day, and the next to be in your right mind because of the loving power that flowed from Jesus to expel the darkness of whatever it was that had invaded your soul? Then to be allowed- as not everyone was, to become one of his traveling followers!¹¹ This is the woman whose name we find in the first resurrection stories.¹²

That such a spiritual diagnosis is not to be dismissed is indicated by the fact that in 2008 the *New Oxford Review* published an article titled “A Case of Demonic Possession.” It was written by a member of the New York Medical College faculty and includes accounts of levitation and others occult phenomena observed by multiple people, including mental health professionals and several priests.¹³ Don’t read it before bedtime! As our culture slips from Christian moorings and into increased spiritual experimentation, we will have more of it to deal with, and the early church will once again be our teacher. Evil is pervasive; if you seek it out, it will find you. So in answer to the question, Why were these two women at the tomb early Sunday morning? the simple answer is best: they loved Jesus, one as his momma, the other as one rescued from spiritual torment.

¹⁰ A recent treatment which takes the tradition realistically is Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007); for a skeptical psychological reading, see Donald Capps, *Jesus the Village Psychiatrist* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2008). Both agree Jesus had powerful effects on people. Much discussion was created by M. Scott Peck, *Glimpses Of The Devil* (New York: Free Press, 2005), an account of an exorcism in his psychiatric practice. For a recent summary of research, see C.F. Evans, “Jesus and Exorcism...”, Chapter 6 in Darrell Bock, editor, *Who Is Jesus* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2012), 79-92.

¹¹ The Gerasene demoniac of Mark 5:1-20 requested to follow and was refused, presumably because he was a Gentile, and at this point the mission was to Israel.

¹² For a full treatment, see Gerald O’Collins, Daniel Kendall, “Mary Magdalene As A Major Witness To Jesus Resurrection,” *Theological Studies*, 48 (1987), 631-646, the conclusion of which is, “Among the female recipients of the appearances, Mary Magdalene is portrayed in Scripture as having the primary role.”

¹³ Dr. Richard E. Gallagher, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” *New Oxford Review*, February 2008, accessed at www.newoxfordreview.org.

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Now had this been all that happened, we wouldn't know it. Without the resurrection, Jesus would have been a minor footnote in a Jewish history of the day.¹⁴ One more Jewish prophet with foolish dreams crushed by the powers that be. Christianity would not exist. It all hangs on what, if anything, happened next.

In his play *Salome*, Oscar Wilde has Herod receive a report that Jesus has been raising the dead. "I do not wish him to do that," says Herod. "I forbid him to do that. I allow no man to raise the dead. This man must be found and told that I forbid him to raise the dead."

"That," says Bishop N.T. Wright, "is the bluster of a tyrant who knows his power is threatened. But Wilde's next line is the real crunch, for us and for Herod. 'Where is this man?' demands Herod."

"He is in every place, lord," replies the courtier, "but it is hard to find him."¹⁵

You see, once the dead are raised, tyrants lose power. You can no longer as easily control people who believe in a God who raises the dead. Such people are dangerous, and whoever is doing this must be stopped. A Jesus who raised Lazarus might raise men killed in battle; there would be no way to stop such an army.

2) vv.2-7b Divine Revelation In Multiple Forms.

To say the words *God* and *creation* in the same breath is to set up a worldview, a map of reality.¹⁶ God as source, creation as product. Related but not merged, each with its own integrity so that both can be spoken of without confusion: God *and* Creation.¹⁷ It is the first Christian assertion, "I believe in God the Father Almighty,

¹⁴ Marcus Borg & John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 190.

¹⁵ Edited from N.T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 75-76.

¹⁶ For a good introduction to world view studies, see Mark Cosgrove, *Foundations of Christian Thought: Faith, Learning, and the Christian World View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), esp. Chapter 12, "Christian Theism: Personhood Explained," 134-150.

¹⁷ On the importance of this binary model as a defense against pantheism and idolatry, see Peter Jones, *One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference* (Escondido, CA:

maker of heaven and earth.”

That is how Jews saw the world. Not the world without God- philosophical atheism, scientific materialism and modern secularism. Not a world with many gods- polytheism, and not the world as God or merged with God- pantheism where the world is God’s body. In the map given in Scripture, God and creation are related yet distinct, near yet not confused. God is both holy and transcendent- other than the world, and yet immanent- near to every part. We live in a dual reality: a visible world and an invisible world,¹⁸ and unless the other world takes the initiative to make itself known it remains hidden and mysterious, sensed but not seen. But when someone on the other side unlocks the door and steps out, to our side, it is termed *divine revelation*, and it is a form of real knowledge, though different from the knowledge we acquire through scientific observation.¹⁹

And when the means of disclosure is an angel, it’s known as an *angelophany*. When the means is the risen Jesus, it is a *christophany*. And in the story before us the two women have both: first the angel of the Lord appears and speaks, then the risen Jesus appears and speaks. First the angel interprets the meaning of the empty tomb; they then meet its former occupant. *He’s not here* becomes *Here he is!* The revelation of what’s happened comes not all at once but in layers.

So to the wrenching troubles these two women already endured, there was added another layer. I do not want to minimize how thoroughly disorienting this must have been. To have the other world open itself is to move all the familiar markers of our internal maps. It’s why people with a fresh experience of God may seem loopy and confused for a while. The puzzle pieces have been rearranged to form a new picture. To stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon or before great art often produces a similar dizzying effect. And if what happened here had not been verified by experiences with Jesus by others, we might write it off as a grief-induced

Main Entry Editions, 2010).

¹⁸ What is implicit in the Apostles’ Creed is made explicit in the Nicene Creed, “... of all that is, *seen and unseen*.”

¹⁹ Jason Vickers, “Canonical Theism and the Primacy of Ontology,” in William J. Abraham, et. al., *Canonical Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 158.

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hallucinations.²⁰ Because there were multiple appearances to different people in varying locations over time, it's clear they were being visited and not insane.

Whenever Matthew introduces a scene with the little phrase *And behold*, it's a cue to divine revelation. God is about to appear in some way, in this case through the highest of the heavenly host, *the angel of the Lord* with all the phenomena. The ground shook, the stone moved, there was a burst of light as the veil was crossed and the Lord's angel became visible, "His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." This is no Tinkerbell.

What is seen is the mirrored reflection of God's own light. To sit on the stone in a relaxed posture is a statement of victory over our final enemy death and its most visible symbol- the grave. What crushes us becomes an angelic settee! In the presence of this awesome being the guards shook as much as the earth beneath their feet. The showing forth of divine glory paralyzed them, "and (they) became as dead men." This is why Matthew introduces the scene with his alert, "And behold," which we might paraphrase as "Now watch this!" That the women are not rendered immobile is a testimony that they are rightly related to the unseen world, whereas the soldiers are not. What is life for one is near death for the other. When required, God has absolutely no trouble getting our attention! I find that a comfort. Until I receive new instructions, I am to stay busy with the orders I have right here in Greenwood.

There is first a visual component to the angelophany. This is followed in verses 5 through 7 by a long audio component. The angel of the Lord speaks to the two Mary's, "Do not be afraid," then gives fresh information about what has happened to Jesus. The angel knows why they are here, "... for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified." They come in grief, are startled by an angel, then find a place of God-given peace. People hear better when they're calm; ever noticed that? They stand under the reflected light of God and are about to be let in on the biggest secret of all time, "He is not here; for he was raised, as he said."

²⁰ A popular alternative theory refuted by Gary Habermas & Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004), 104-119. For a defense of the resurrection by a philosopher, see Craig *Reasonable Faith*, Chapter 8, "The Resurrection of Jesus," 333-404. On the history, see Craig Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 330-349.

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The body is gone, and the revealed reason is that Jesus has been raised from the dead in such a manner that his corpse was both taken up and transformed into a new embodiment by the energies and life of the Holy Spirit.²¹ The voice of the verb is passive; he *was raised*- meaning *God did it!* They are even invited by the angel to verify part of the evidence, the *he is not here* part, “Come, see the place where he lay.” So whatever happens next, this much is clear. This is not just a vision or an internal religious experience. It involves an absent body as negative evidence. Layer by layer- and through an angelic intermediary- God is making a cumulative case argument that something wonderful has happened to the dead Jesus. And it is being made to two unlikely witnesses: to Mary the demon lady and Jesus’ own momma. No one would have created such a story had it not actually happened. In a world where men ran religion and guarded the structures of credibility, it was just too embarrassing to have your foundational witnesses be women who hung around tombs early in the morning.²² But then that says something about the kind of God we serve, doesn’t it? A God who upends death may be a God who upends the power structures of the whole world. Giving women such theological status and credibility is quite a move!

What comes next is highly instructive. The two Mary’s are not to hide the revelation but spread it to the next layer. Good news is always for the sake of mission, “Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.”

Call it what you will, I call it doctrinal preaching. They know something the disciples do not, and rather than have the angel make repeat appearances, the message is entrusted to these two. As I love to say: they are *angelic epistles to the absent apostles!* Divine revelation is by design economical and lean, not a wasted word. Whether people accept it when shared is a whole different issue. Believing cannot

²¹ In Romans 1:3-4 Paul labels the Spirit as the immediate agent of resurrection. The U.M. Church, in its *Articles of Religion*, is committed to a fully embodied resurrection, both for Jesus and for us as well: “Article III: Of the Resurrection of Christ: Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day” (*BOD 2012*: 64).

²² See the two articles by Gary Habermas, “Resurrection of Jesus” and “Resurrection of Jesus, Implications Of” in W.C. Campbell-Jack & Gavin McGrath, *New Dictionary Of Christian Apologetics* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2006), 614-619.

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simply be turned on and off by an act of the will. Trust is complex reality involving evidence, testimony, curiosity, validation, plausibility, world view and the enabling of the Holy Spirit. It takes grace to believe and to trust.

But not only are the women to share the news, they are given directions as to what is to happen next to the reconstituted Jesus movement. They have not only *the message* but *the plan*, “And behold, he is going before you (back) to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo (or *behold*), I have told you so.” Notice the movement: to the tomb, then from the tomb to the disciples, then to Galilee for a promised rendezvous. Jesus was a movement of God, and here the momentum- having come to a dead stop, is being restored. Not a monument to a dead hero but a movement trying to keep up with where Jesus is going next. This is the church! “So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.” They were immediately obedient to the divine revelation, even though they have verified only the first part of what the angel said, the *he is not here* part.

If you want a small, manageable life, keep the one you’ve got! If you want a larger and deeper life, obey what he’s told you, then ask for more guidance. Your life will be as small as the last time you told the Lord *No*. The German theologian Wolfhart Pannenburg has written: “The evidence for Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, *you have to change the way you live.*”²³ Two women went to the tomb to see Jesus properly mourned. Their act of piety was met by a flood of divine revelation which was real knowledge from the invisible world to be lived out and verified along the way. They acted in love, and when they went to the tomb there opened to them a love stronger than death.

3) vv.9-10 Meeting The Risen Lord.

“Good morning,” “How are you?” These are normal greetings. In those days a conventional greeting was “All hail” which could be translated “Rejoice, you-all!” That is what the risen Jesus said as Mary 1 and Mary 2 were running back to the city. First an angel stepped from the next world into theirs; now the risen Lord does the same, and if he’d said “Boo!” it would have stopped their hearts dead! Verse 9, “And behold, Jesus met them and said, ‘All Hail.’” “Morning, Mom. Hello, Mary!” They

²³ PreachingToday.com search under *resurrection*.

stand at the membrane between the visible and invisible worlds.

Again it is a revelation in two parts: visual and audio. They see; they hear; they identify both sight and the sound as Jesus because it matches the man they know. The earlier message of “He is not here” was verified by “Come, see the place where he lay;” now the second part, “for he was raised as he said,” is verified by the sight and sound of their risen friend. To obey is to invite further revelation.

Jesus stood still and waited on them. We know because Matthew says, “And they *came up* and told hold of his feet and worshiped him.” It would take the church several centuries to work through the intellectual implications of this verse. First, that the nature of the resurrection body was palpable, not ethereal and ghostly but solid to the touch, and yet he could appear in closed rooms and vanish between blinks of an eye.²⁴ His old body was now transformed with marvelous new powers. Not just resuscitation back to this life but bodily resurrection and transformation into a new life beyond the power of death. Jesus is the only one to this point who has fully entered the new world of the kingdom as its first example and pioneer. We can’t hurt him anymore! And secondly that to worship him- to give Jesus divine honor and the heart’s devotion, was not idolatry. It was not to worship one less than God; it was to worship the one God of their fathers and mothers with a new richness because Jesus shares fully in the divine nature, an insight that would eventually mature into the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: that Yahweh’s second proper name is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is not just the agent of God in history but as fully deserving of divine honors as the Father and the Spirit. Worship is their response to the presence of the risen Lord, and the did it on their faces, which we can’t because of pews!

Let’s pause a moment. If Jesus has been vindicated by God, then he is set apart from all others in a category of one. His whole prior life, therefore, is now marked out as the determinative source of divine revelation against which all other claims must be measured because he’s the only one God backed in resurrection, which is the ultimate stamp of approval. Not Mohammed, not Buddha, not Elvis, not John Kennedy, not L. Ron Hubbard, not Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King, but

²⁴ On the history of reflection on the resurrection body, see Brian Schmisek, *Resurrection of the Flesh or Resurrection from the Dead* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2013), 1-48; for a homiletical angle, see my *Resurrection: A Pastor’s Reading of the Major New Testament Resurrection Passages* (Fort Valley, GA: Bristol, 2014).

Matthew 28:1-8, 9-10 15

Jesus only. Only one resurrection thus far. It's why we treasure the Four Gospels since they tell us the story of who the Father sent and then backed. If other religions have insights compatible with Jesus, fine. But if not, we cannot incorporate them. The resurrection is what makes John 14:6 a statement of fact, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; *no one comes to the Father but by me.*" The Father chooses to be defined in history by the Son, and when the world say No on Friday, God said Yes on Sunday. In Jesus alone do we gain a clear picture of who God is and what God is up to since the Son comes to us from within the divine life as its official ambassador.

And if his body was taken up and transformed with his personal identity retained, it means the whole world, cloaked as it presently is under a layer of death, is in principle transformable, including us with all our peculiarities. Matter can be a vehicle of glory. If a part has been suffused in divine life- and the name of that part is Jesus of Nazareth- then the whole world will one day burst into flame. If one lump of coal has been pressed into diamond, the whole world is scattered with riches. Our salvation is not finally about escape from the body in the world but the transformation of them both, and in Jesus we have a preview of coming attractions. We affirm life after death with Christ in the paradise of heaven, but we do not stop there. Where we are headed is *life after life after death*²⁵ in a new resurrection creation which is this world and our bodies in their comprehensive environment, only with all the deep effects sin and evil removed and the vision of God for all. Only then will we be what were designed to be, the full image bearers of God.

The political meaning of Jesus' life as punctuated by the exclamation mark of resurrection is that God has served public notice that the petty and great tyrants of this world do not have the last word. They cannot touch and harm Jesus any longer. He is beyond their power, and they are headed for extinction. And when we take up the creative intellectual and political resistance to wherever God's vision of a new creation is blocked, we are acting with and not against the deepest grain of the universe. We are a people of hope in a broken world.

The only thing new Jesus added to the angel's prior command was that his friendship with the male disciples was also restored, "...go and tell *my brothers* to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." And since that first Easter, the church has been stumbling forward to keep up with a Lord who's always out ahead of his people.

²⁵ A wonderful, evocative phrase of N.T. Wright.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Gary Habermas has spent his scholarly career exploring the logic and defending the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. One day it became existential. He writes:

“In 1995 my wife, Debbie, had the flu. When it didn't go away, we went to the hospital. The first sentence the doctor uttered was, ‘You've got some serious problems here.’ My heart sank. Little did I know my belief in Jesus' resurrection was about to be severely tested by the sting of pain and grief. Debbie had stomach cancer. Four months later- at 43, she passed away just after our 23rd anniversary. I lost my best friend

During Debbie's suffering, I regularly took refuge in the truth of Jesus' resurrection. It had been my major research area for 25 years, and I appreciated a student who asked, ‘What would you do now if Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead?’

I knew the resurrection had a historical, theoretical side, but I wasn't fully aware of its practical power. How did all this help me while Debbie was dying? I imagined what God might say in response to my questions.... He would ask, "Gary, did I raise my Son from the dead?"

"Of course you did, Lord, but why is Debbie dying?"

"Gary, did I raise my Son from the dead?"

"Yes, Lord, but...."

"Gary, did I raise my Son from the dead?"

I imagined God repeating the same question until I got the point. There was an answer to Debbie's suffering, even if I didn't know it. If Jesus has been raised, I can trust that Debbie will be raised someday too. It was sufficient to know that because of Jesus' resurrection, and because Debbie and I belong to Jesus, we will be together again....!"²⁶

There is a way to identify resurrection people. Look for the way they face suffering with realism and hope; look for all the ways they keep moving and spreading the word that a new world is already on the way. Each of us is called to this adventure of being a follower of the this Jesus. We are here to help you, and he is here to make his case. Will you seek him? Will you trust him? Will you follow him? Will you come to his table and fling open your heart?

²⁶ April 2000.
