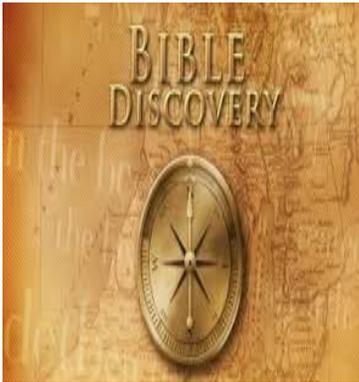


Love was in the Room



We've entered this week on the other side of Easter, perhaps still trying to answer the question of what difference Christ's resurrection makes for the lives of those who believe it, for those who live their lives dependent on it, for those who have Easter's risen Jesus in their hearts, for those including you and me – I hope. It seems strange the place we should start is a locked and darkened upper room where the bedraggled followers of Jesus are found huddled in fear of religious authorities. Remember the empty tomb? Remember hearing Mary's report and running to check it out, or that scene with burial linens just lying there – minus a body? It doesn't seem to have left much of an impact as we find them hidden behind locked doors, living in fear, stymied from moving forward!

The last thought on their minds is resuming the ministry Jesus began.

Before pointing fingers at the disciples, let's examine our responses to the empty tomb. Easter has passed and aside from a little too much chocolate, and possibly a few extra pounds, what have we to show for it? Have we come from the empty tomb with resolve to follow Jesus? Have we determined to live our lives in step with God's Word, following God's Son, led by God's Spirit? Are we truly thankful not only for the sacrificed Lamb of God who paid such a price for our sins, but for the risen Saviour who's dealt death its final blow blasting open the doors to heaven? Or are we, too, huddled, waiting, wondering what comes next?

The stage is now set to answer the question of "now what". It's the question weighing on the hearts of disciples who ran and hid – disciples who denied knowing Jesus. It's the question that disciples feeling helpless and lost were about to have answered as love poured into that upper room. As they're at their lowest, Jesus appears in within the locked room greeting them, offering His peace - His peace that passes understanding. The peace He promised them would be sufficient to meet all their needs. It's just what the doctor ordered in their time of chaos and fear. Love was in the room and in that amazing moment of love Jesus demonstrates the fullness of His resurrection.

It's an important feature in God's Word that it again and again records eye witness accounts of Jesus in risen form. The Apostle Paul tells us as many as 500 saw Him. To see Jesus is to believe. Beyond the somewhat circumspect evidence of an empty tomb, is the presence of Jesus standing among them, having a meal with them, opening the word; explaining scriptures to them. Jesus has more in mind, however, than merely appearing to and fellowshiping with frightened disciples. As the room filled with His love, He gives them a purpose, a presence, and an authority. Jesus commissions them, as He commissions us, to:

- (1) **Go** as our purpose for Him;
- (2) **Ever equipped through His presence** in the gift of His Holy Spirit; and
- (3) **Speaking in His name** as we go through His presence under His supreme authority.

Because **l**ove was in the room those disciples saw the risen Christ and their lives were totally transformed. I mean, they went from that room, and once they'd received the Holy Spirit, they started preaching boldly the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they changed history in the power and under the authority of Jesus. Because love was in the room the disciples boldly preached God's Word rather than cower in fear, determinedly shared and cared for others rather than worry about "me first" and demonstrated signs and wonders only possible in the power of God. The gospel's simple message of Christ Jesus dying for sin,

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rising in power, offering salvation freely to all who come to Him was all they had to say – but it was all that was needed – it remains all that is needed! The apostle Paul says, the gospel is "*that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day*" [1 Corinthians 15:3-4]. What

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made the difference was the resurrected Christ coming through shackled doors, revealing the holes in his hands and feet, having fellowship with them even while they sat terrified. The Bible relates Jesus fulfills his promise sending a counselor to them, strengthening them, giving them understanding. That promise is ours today!

Ultimately, everything hinges on the resurrection of Christ. Paul said "*And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*" [1 Corinthians 15:14]. His resurrection is absolutely critical to all of Christian faith. Because Jesus rose from the dead and is alive today, we have confidence His claims are true, we know Jesus has all power! Not as the world wields power, not only power over His life – power to change and direct our lives!

This power was abundantly evident in how Christ's resurrection changed the lives of those who followed Him during His earthly life. When Jesus died on the cross, they were all terrified. Peter, watching from a distance as Jesus' trial proceeded, when approached by the mere slip of a teenage girl, was so afraid he denied emphatically he even knew Jesus. Not the picture of loyalty and strength Peter had promised! Peter wasn't alone in his failure – every one of the disciples was gripped with defeat and weakness. Little wonder after Jesus' death on the cross the scene was one of defeat, sorrow, despair with the disciples locked in a room out of fear. Their leader was dead, and they anxiously expected they were next. That is... until everything changed!

That's why we celebrated Easter again this year as such a big deal. At Easter, we're reminded the death of Jesus didn't end in defeat but victory. The story doesn't stay on Calvary's hill, the tale doesn't finish in a borrowed grave, it's found as love was in the room changing hearts, preparing souls to serve the living God. Christ brought a new beginning having won the greatest war human history will ever know. He paid the debt we couldn't pay for our sin, and He accomplished everything necessary for your salvation and mine. And He physically rose from death to prove it!

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Has Jesus entered in to the innermost room of your heart? Have you understood that the Good News of Christ is now in the hands of those who dare to follow Him? As Christ's body, the Church, we've been commissioned by Christ to witness the power of resurrection living. But do we? Do we live intentionally as eternal recipients of Christ's love? Do we live filled with the power and authority received through God's Holy Spirit? The Church - all who profess Christ as their Lord and Saviour - is called to trust the Holy Spirit as it leads and guides our ministries to a broken and hurting world. ***How are we doing?***



Boy, do we see ourselves in Thomas!

In today's story, there's so much interaction between Jesus and His followers. They in turn witness to Thomas, the absent apostle when Jesus first appeared. Boy do we see ourselves in Thomas! We, like Thomas, want to see, touch, taste, smell and hear and feel the fullness of something before we'll ever accept its claim. Isn't this honestly who we are, isn't this how we respond? When Jesus appears to them again, Thomas is there. Jesus tells **Thomas to touch, feel, and see so that he may believe. As Thomas stands before the risen Christ all he can do is stammer, "My Lord and my God!"** [John 20:28].

Once again as love fills the upper room, Christ doesn't angrily scold Thomas, nor does He belittle and confront you and me in our doubts and fears. Jesus simply offers Himself as

living proof He's all we need! Jesus challenges doubters to believe, the hopeless to accept, the defeated to stand in victory. The love Jesus demonstrates in this scene is powerful. Jesus wants us to remember his love!

The powerful transformation of these common men, once filled with superstition and fear; the tremendous revolution in the hearts of believers through the centuries, the amazing change that's come over each one who's found Jesus' great love in the upper rooms of their lives and has undergone that Resurrection through Christ's appearance to them. The message is that when we've experienced the presence of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, we're never the same. Such experiences transform who we are; such experiences commission us to be sent, to take authority with and provide evidence of Christ's presence in our lives. We too stand having experienced love in the room and exclaim "My Lord and my God!"



If you've been blessed, knowing Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, then that question "Why did Jesus have to die?" has been answered! Answered with the great love He's poured into your opened heart. It's the great news that contrary to the ironical message that this man, renowned for His goodness – feeding the poor, befriending the marginalized, healing the sick is best known by a lost, forlorn world for dying a cruel horrific death of crucifixion on the cross as a common criminal, His life seemingly cut off has more to the story – Jesus does not face His end on Good Friday or even that first Easter Sunday. To those who would take a look and see, to those who would open their hearts and invite Him in, JESUS demonstrates His power over death, His eternal nature in life every day as having been raised from the grave He appears and love is in the room!



A risen Christ makes all the difference!

A risen Christ makes all the difference! If you've accept Jesus as Lord, as your Saviour, you know what I'm talking about. If you've never accepted Jesus as Lord of your life then I pray our conversation has brought cause for you to think soberly and honestly about these things. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead proves not only He is truly Lord of all but He truly, absolutely, positively loves you ever more. **Yes He does!**

If this Easter season has given you the hope and joy you have searched for in your life and you have said yes to Jesus coming into your heart, then you too know the wonderful joy of the love of Jesus in the room of your heart. If it is not your experience, give us a call or send an email and let's talk about it.

Blessings,

Pastor Dave