

When Heaven and Earth Collide

Wayne Waibel – 04/17/2022

The thing about Easter with all of its promises and rituals and warm feelings and hope, is that what we are celebrating is not so much a risen life as it is a commissioning to share the good news.

Not to detract from the significance of resurrection or the absolute triumph that death – the last enemy – has been defeated, but the charge of Jesus to Mary at this moment when heaven and earth collide - was to let Him go and tell His brethren. This was the commissioning.

.....

It took a while for the disciples to grasp the momentous forces at play with the resurrection of their Lord. This is understandable – given the atrocities they had just witnessed. One could hardly fault them for not remembering that this event had been pre-ordained from a time long before their comprehension.

Isaiah set forth the way of the servant; Jesus deliberately set out to follow that way. And we are charged to continue His ministry to the ends of the earth. Resurrection faith sends its adherents toward work and witness here and now.

While their lives with Jesus were challenging, bordering on otherworldly, and most certainly rewarding, it probably never occurred to them the kinds of trials He would endure. The suffering – all of the emotionally draining dynamics at play – torturous persecutions at the hands of a world that could not be troubled with His simple message of love.

Still, their grief and sense of loss at His death was profound. And it was into this gaping chasm of emptiness that Jesus is resurrected. Not resuscitated – not brought back to life – raised from the dead – a new being entirely. So new that He was not readily recognized.

.....

For us, the process of conversion can be very lengthy. And that process can involve resistance before there is acceptance. It's a good thing God has limitless patience. It's probably safe to say that none of us would see salvation were that not true.

So many things in our faith center around Easter. Most Christians consider and refer to themselves as Easter people. The risen Christ is the centerpiece for us. We emulate His ways – we revere His accomplishments, and we stand in awe of His role in all of creation.

We spend a good deal of our adult life wandering and wondering. Words of the prophets do not always result in the full comprehension of exactly what happens when heaven and earth collide. The resultant peace and authentic transformation cannot be imposed – they must be discovered.

Everything Jesus did had a purpose. From the disciples He called, through the Parables He taught, to the miracles He performed. Then there was how He lived a life of love beyond all imagining.

And this life was but an emulation of God the Father in whom He delighted and for whom He denied nothing, not even death. The greatest power in the universe is the power of self-giving, sacrificial love.

This extraordinary Man came into a world that did not deserve the sacrifice He was willing to make on their behalf. His was a singular purpose that held the future of all humanity in the balance. And He walked that path with supreme humility, confidence, and grace.

It wasn't the Jews of ancient Palestine that killed Jesus. It also was not the oppressive imperial Roman Empire that killed Jesus. As the most notable theologian Dietrich Bonhoffer so eloquently proposed, it was God who pushed Jesus out of this world and onto the cross. This was a very deliberate event.

Having known His fate and His purpose from the very beginning and choosing to accept all of the consequences along the way to the inevitable conclusion sets Jesus apart from any other being by any other measure – for all time.

What the disciples could not fathom that first Easter was that their grief and anger and confusion and even disbelief was all part of a grand design that they were not only going to perpetuate, but play leading roles in. The message was not lost on them, but their place was not yet evident – much as it is with us all these years later.

.....

The message of hope that resonates heavily at Eastertime is not diminished by the clamor of a world fraught with shallowness and treachery. Each of us in our own way and our own time reach out to almighty God for the guidance and fortitude essential for day-to-day living.

However we view the events depicted in John and the synoptic gospels, our steadfast conclusions closely resemble one another. We have the benefit of viewing the events surrounding the life of Christ through multiple lenses and at an unprecedented historical vantage point.

And still – the single most important aspect is faith. How we resolve that which we cannot understand or prove or even catch a glimpse of determines the ferocity with which we live our life of love.

We could not be in better hands, and the fact that we know this is really all that is asked of us. Because if we truly feel the love of God the Father, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, then we will love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength. And we will love each other as Christ has loved us.

.....

Easter is a time of new life in the natural world. Today we can see so many buds bursting forth with color and the promise of renewal that it fills us with wonder and awe. The struggles of winter seem distant and almost as though they never were.

We rejoice for many reasons, but our main praise is in the form of a life well led. And that undertaking is made manifest in the belief that there was and is a savior, which is Christ the Lord, who personifies the love of a God who cherishes His children so much that He broke into the world to provide for them a morning such as this.

And this morning today is possible only because there was a cross, and a tomb, and a perfect soul willing to sacrifice His life on earth - that we may have the hope of life everlasting. And so it begins. Amen.