

The Rest of the Story

Wayne Waibel – 04/14/2024

While we are not ourselves eyewitnesses to those things, we are no less commissioned to preach repentance and the remission of sins in His name to all nations. The charge remains, even if the background is less dramatic.

This gift of salvation is not a personal possession, but something we share with others as we live out our lives as God's transformational representatives in creation.

This life affirming Christ is the salvific healing agent who comes into our lives to help us transform the violent and destructive ways we often direct toward each other into pathways of peace and understanding. But we must first – let Him in.

.....

The narrative from last week's lection in John changes very little in Luke's account. The disciples remain terrified and frightened as they lock themselves in a windowless room. Jesus then appears in their midst and really puts a scare into them.

While it's easy to understand the impact a resurrected Jesus would have on a first century disciple, we still can't help but feel a little let down that their collective faith is so fragile.

But then, who's to say that we would react any differently were a manifestation to appear in a locked, windowless chamber out of nowhere and proclaim themselves God incarnate.

In fact, we would probably be even less believing today, what with the proliferation of technology in our modern world. Our twenty-first century arrogance would've kept us from fear - perhaps, but that would likely be the only difference.

Back then, the horror of the crucifixion would have ended all hope for the disciples. Their leader had been betrayed and abandoned by His followers. He was not saved by His heavenly Father or a host of Angels. He was left bloodied, broken, and lifeless in a tomb and locked inside.

From all appearances – the Roman Empire – Ruling Elders and the Jewish nation had prevailed in eliminating this insurrectionist - this blasphemer. We know the rest of the story – His disciples did not.

.....

Somewhere along the line, common courtesy and genuine hospitality gave way to a skewed sense of entitlement and an abiding attitude of self-importance.

Where are the cooler heads that used to prevail when things got out of hand like this? They're sitting in a locked room – frightened – probably terrified – and left to ponder strategies for a no-win situation.

.....

I'm starting to empathize with the disciples instead of judging them. This business of being a Christian is not for the faint-hearted. It has not as yet been revealed to us what we shall be, but rest assured, when Christ returns, we will know who He is – then it will be revealed.

Possibility beyond the probable is the nature of religious hope. There can be great comfort in that basic truth. As Christians, we fully understand that God aims to redeem creation and us. We are all part of His redemptive plan. Perhaps the most difficult obstacle in our path to redemption is our human nature. We tend to trust experience more than we trust God. But God not only creates, God also recreates – so there is hope.

What our little band of disciples were about to live into was that the word of God calls us to peace rather than security. We are not called to prominence or wealth or even health, we are called to peace. And this is made possible, because in Jesus, death is transcended. It holds no power over us any longer.

.....

It is the truth of grace that is greater than our sin. Which is not to say do as you please. On the contrary – as you believe, so you behave. Don't let the opposite hold true, or you'll find yourself on the business end of circumstances that somebody else is going to dictate.

There is a certainty with change. If it occurs it is almost never painless. And the one thing that every agent of change understands fully is that change happens at the level of action that contains risk.

Our Lord spent a good deal of time engaging with the poor and outcast of society by choice. He didn't give them money and kind words; He sat down and broke bread with them. Who knew that the simple act of hospitality for the stranger would lead to our true home where all can be at peace? Amen.