

Explore the Bible: Resurrected

March 15, 2021

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for April 4 focuses on Luke 24:1-12.*

In the summer of 2007, I suffered a near-death experience. The Herpes-Simplex virus infected both my liver and my bone marrow. I remember passing out on the floor of our home one night and then awakening two weeks later in the intensive care unit of a local hospital.

It wasn't until I began healing that the hepatologist told me the death rate for that kind of viral infection is 98 percent. He had only three patients with it in his entire career, and I was the only survivor. I had been so sick in the hospital, I hadn't had time to reflect on anything. Later, when my brain began to clear and I learned the seriousness of what I'd experienced did I shudder to think of how close I had come to death.

People later asked me if I'd had any visions of heaven or God during the time I was out. I told them I had not. The one thing I learned for sure and the lesson that shapes every day of my life is how fragile our human existence is and how—whatever we intend to do with our lives—we'd better get serious about it. We never know when we will have had our last earthly opportunity to fulfill whatever our calling may be.

There are at least two issues that always confront us each year when we ponder the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. One is more theological, if you will. We think of the way in which Jesus' resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. It should give us hope.

Crucial piece of the redemptive puzzle

Much like the game Jenga, there is one crucial block of wood which, if removed, causes the entire tower of blocks to fall. The key to the game is for each player to remove one block at a time without removing the most significant block. The loser of the game is the one who unwittingly removes the key block causing the collapse of all the rest.

The resurrection of Christ is that crucial “piece” of the redemptive puzzle. If we remove the resurrection of Jesus from the Christian faith, the rest of our faith collapses. The fact that Jesus died for our sin is vital. It is also meaningless unless Jesus was raised again to new life. His death and resurrection are two sides of the same coin. There is no meaning to one without the other.

There is more. The Scripture records the astonishment, even the bewilderment, of those who had followed Jesus. They were stunned when they did not find a body to care for. We need the rest of Scripture to help us understand the full depth of this story’s meaning.

What does it mean for us?

There is what happened at the resurrection. There is also the meaning it has for us, even all these centuries later.

In the letter to the Philippian church, the Apostle Paul put it this way: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ, who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness . . . He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8).

The words are mind-numbing. Jesus “became obedient to death.” Jesus

never placed self over obedience to the call of God because, to do so, Jesus would have consigned us to an irreversible death.

The Scripture is clear. We, too, are to do the same. If death is what it costs to follow Jesus, so be it. Especially if that death leads to life with others.

What are we willing to do?

And, if we are truly willing to lay our very being on the line that others, what else might we be willing to do?

Would we be willing to lose an argument for the sake of Jesus? Would we be willing to give up our place in line for the sake of Jesus? Would we be willing to release our resources to meet the needs of others for the sake of Jesus?

If Jesus was willing to suffer the humiliation of the cross, the torture of it, where do we draw the line?

Knowing that “the women” went to prepare Jesus’ body for permanent burial and found none does far more than define our faith; our faith defines the limits to which we should be willing to live and die for the sake of those whose life demands it.

We are responsible for passing along this wonderful truth, not only at Easter but every Sunday, every day, then we are also responsible for making certain to decrease the distance between what we say we believe and how we actually live our daily lives.

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