IN FOCUS: Time to celebrate Resurrection Sunday

March 26, 2010

For two years, we have been praying for and working toward Resurrection Sunday 2010. It is now only days away.

We came with our palm branches and praise this Sunday to celebrate Christ. Yet behind these symbols and the celebration, the Cross and the Resurrection confront us with some difficult questions.

These events single us out from other world religions. The Baha'is cannot include us in their syncretism of prophets and rituals. Muslims and Jews cannot tolerate one who was accursed—hung on a tree until dead. Some academicians have long joined with the Athenians in laughter over the Resurrection of Christ. It is rationally impossible.

Randel Everett

The Crucifixion is troublesome for us as well. Why do we spend a month celebrating the birth of Jesus, which fills two or three chapters in our gospels, and only a few days celebrating the week of Crucifixion and Resurrection, which is detailed in about half of the Gospel of John?

Perhaps we prefer a sentimental faith. It's easier to talk about "Peace on Earth" and focus on a baby in a manger than it is to witness the brutality and humiliation of Jesus hanging on a cross. The Cross reminds us of our own sinfulness. Words like "sin" and "repent" don't fit well with a tolerant society. We prefer to live and let live. Yet the Cross shows us our sins must be horrible if it requires such a costly payment.

The Cross/Resurrection summarizes God's relationship with humanity more than any event in history. God is holy and cannot tolerate sin. He also is

love and bears the penalty for our sin. Not even sin and death can overcome him.

Several years ago, Sheila and I had the opportunity to spend some time with Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York. We first visited with Jim and Carol Cymbala and then had dinner with several from their staff. It was Tuesday, and they said they would save a place for us that night for prayer meeting.

If they had not saved us a place, we could not have found a seat in the 1,500-seat auditorium. Fifteen minutes before the service, about 200 men already were standing at the altar praying out loud simultaneously. The service lasted for two hours with very little preaching and a whole lot of praying. We learned many of the folks present had been addicts, prostitutes, drunks and convicts. They didn't come to the service to be affirmed. They came to be delivered.

I realized we were no different from them. We are all desperate sinners needing a Savior.

Easter is not a time for good folks to come together for a celestial hug so that we might all feel better about ourselves.

Easter is a time when we are reminded God "… rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).

Resurrection Sunday 2010 is a time for celebration!

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