

# Voices: Jesus has risen. So what?

April 25, 2019

At the end of every New Testament class, professor Andy Wakefield summarized the lesson and asked, “So what?”

What followed his question was the part I enjoyed most of the lecture. After his question, Wakefield opened dialogue and put everything he taught in practical terms. For many, that was our “Aha!” moment.

The “so what” question of every session led me to another question: “Now what? How can I apply this teaching to my ministry?”

Answers to those questions helped me find better ways to do ministry and different ways to deal with old problems, to search within my soul and surrender all the areas of my life I wanted to control.

## Jesus has risen, so what? Now what?

On resurrection morning, the disciples experienced what Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* calls “the dark night of the soul.” Quoting St. John of the Cross, Foster explains the disciples’ uncertainty was not something bad or destructive. Rather, it is an experience to be welcomed much like a sick person welcomes surgery promising health and well-being.

The disciples were together with doors locked, full of fear. Jesus suddenly appeared in the room and filled the disciples’ minds and hearts with peace. Their hearts also were filled with joy and a sense of victory. They celebrated.

# **Jesus' resurrection gives us real peace**

Peace is needed in Sri Lanka, in Haiti, in Venezuela, in the whole world, even in our country. Peace is needed in our hearts.

We cannot let the world overcome and overshadow the goodness that Jesus' resurrection brought to us. Not poverty, not injustice nor politics should dominate our culture because the power of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ means peace to us.

In *The Jesus Principle: Building Churches in the Image of Christ*, Charles Wade writes that one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace. Peace is that inner tranquility we receive from Jesus even in turbulent moments, like the one the disciples faced or the one Christians in Sri Lanka face today.

So we have peace. Now what?

# **Jesus' resurrection ensured the giving of his Spirit**

The moment Jesus imparted peace to his disciples was not the end of the story but was the beginning of a purposeful yet challenging journey.

In addition to peace, Jesus gave his Spirit. John wrote, "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). Jesus' action transformed his disciples.

Now they also received God's Spirit. So what? Now what?

# **Jesus' resurrection guarantees our**

# **transformation**

Paul taught that the power of Christ at work in us is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). The power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to everyone to be transformed in the likeness of Jesus.

Our culture portrays personal and spiritual transformation as mere behavior modification. Rather, the transforming power that raised Christ from the grave is what is needed. The Apostle Paul wrote: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Resurrection provided peace and personal transformation. So what? What now?

## **Jesus’ resurrection establishes our mission**

When we look at Jesus’ visit to his disciples after his resurrection, we see he gave them more than peace and power. He also gave them a mission. His resurrection gives us the most significant mission we will ever have. Jesus said to them, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

After being with, teaching and caring for his disciples for 40 days, Jesus said to them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV).

Jesus made it clear: Salvation is not the end but is the beginning of a new era in the Christian life. Jesus' resurrection makes it clear that the Christian life is not about being saved but is about surrendering our lives to God.

## **Life in the risen Jesus is ongoing discipleship**

Dallas Willard, in *The Kingdom Life*, wrote: "There is a reductionist view of salvation that once salvation is taken care of and heaven after death is assured, that is the end of it. It is all done for us, and is all over and done with. So, what are we going to do now? What about discipleship? ... The basic act of salvation from God's point of view is the impartation of life. It is regeneration. And that life imparted is resurrection life, an ongoing, developing life."

I could not agree more. Discipleship is resurrection life, the message of the Great Commission. It begins with sharing the good news and baptizing those who believe, and it continues with teaching obedience to Jesus and practicing Jesus' life of spiritual discipline and the daily presence of God.

The disciples understood the enormous task before them. To carry out their mission—the Great Commission—they renounced the world's ordering of their priorities and followed Jesus' lead.

Easter Sunday is over, but our responsibility of reaching people with the gospel and helping them find God's purpose for their life has just begun.

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