**Resurrection Inside Out**

**Easter 4-12-20**

*19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you…."24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” 26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Now I don’t know about you, but I think Thomas has gotten something of a bad rap from history.

* How would you like it if through all the ages of history people remembered you by one honest blunder that 95% of us would almost certainly have made.
	+ But throughout history he has been known as “doubting Thomas”.
		- In fact, it has even become a moniker; a negative description of anyone who is skeptical about something that seems obvious to us.
	+ Yet this is totally unfair since the Bible tells us that when women came back from the tomb with the news of Jesus’ resurrection, ALL the disciples doubted.
* And yet, who wouldn’t have doubted?
	+ Granted, they had seen Jesus raise others from the dead, so it wouldn’t have been their first resurrection.
	+ And it is true that Jesus told them He would be coming back after three days, so if they had been paying attention and taken Him at His word, then this wouldn’t have taken them by surprise.
		- But the Bible makes it clear that, though Jesus told his disciples both were coming, neither His death nor His resurrection had registered in the disciples’ mind.
		- They simply couldn’t believe it or wouldn’t believe it.
* So poor Thomas, to this very day, has been a symbol of doubt, even though once he saw Jesus he made one of the most powerful confessions of faith in Jesus found in the gospels.

**Switch View**

*My Lord and my God!*

* + And church tradition has it that Thomas went as far east as India, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus.

But today, I am not wanting to focus on Thomas’ doubt, but on what it was that restored his faith – the resurrected body of Christ.

* Because I wonder if it might dispel us of some poor theology that I think has crept into the Evangelical Church and in many ways weighed us down unnecessarily.
* Look again as vs. 27

*27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”*

**Switch View**

* + Sometimes it is the most obvious thing that can make an impact on our thinking, and here’s the obvious thing I want to point out in this passage:
		- Jesus’ body carried the scars of His life before resurrection.
		- Resurrection had not “healed” his body.
			* His wounds were still present and visible.
				+ In fact, it was the presence of those wounds – the ability to examine them – that helped Thomas to believe.
		- Jesus had not “dumped” His bruised and scarred body for a glorious new one, because the scars on His this old body brought a glory all their own.
			* They proved that “though He died, yet does He live.”
* It should be obvious, resurrection is not about something new, but rather giving life back to something that was old and dead.

**Switch View**

* + So we find it with Jesus’ raising of his friend Lazarus from the dead in John 11.

*43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*

* + - When Lazarus is raised, he is not given a new body, rather Jesus brought life and healthy to his old one.

**Pic slide**

* + - * They even had to unwrap it in order to let him loose.

**Switch View**

So, why am I pointing this out? Because when we give our lives to Jesus – that is when we are, in the Apostle Paul’s words, *raised in a resurrection like his*, – we seem to think that everything is made new right on the spot.

* Like we’re starting from scratch, and all the old scars and burdens of our lives are removed from us.
	+ We like to quote Scriptures like 2 Cor. 5:17 which tells us:

*17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

* + - Yet, we still bear all our old scars on our bodies.
			* We are not suddenly skinny and beautiful.
			* If we had diabetes, we probably still do and if we were out of shape before being raised with Christ in salvation, we almost certainly still are.
		- Our salvation does not remove the evidences of what we have done or not done – or even what has been done to us – in the years prior to finding Jesus.
			* We could wish that were the case, but we certainly understand that our being “raised with Christ” does not remove the physical results of our previous lifestyles.
				+ Those changes come as the Holy Spirit, who now lives in us, gives us the ability to make changes in the way we live

Which will change the trajectory of our lives.

* But here’s the thing: while we will readily admit that this is true of our physical bodies, we are not nearly as ready to accept that it is also true of the brokenness and scars in our relational and emotional lives.
	+ We like to think that those went away the moment we gave our lives to Jesus.
		- Afterall, isn’t this what a “new creation” means?

It has been almost exactly seven years since I arrived at The Rock, but that was after Easter, so my first Easter here was only six years ago.

* In that 2014 Easter service, I used an illustration about some trees in the Black Hills of South Dakota, but in the end, I believe now that I steered you wrong.
	+ So let me use it again and correct my error.

Some of you may remember that before coming to the Rock I pastored a church in Sioux Falls, SD.

**Switch View**

* That church had an amazingly beautiful camp in the Black Hills called camp Judson.
	+ It was just behind Mount Rushmore and was made up of rugged, rocking ridges covered in Black Hills Spruce.
		- But there was a problem – you see a pine beetle was wreaking havoc on the pine forests of the Black Hills.

**Pic**

* + - * Wiping out whole mountainsides of trees and leaving them susceptible to enormous forest fires.
			* And in 2011, they were discovered at Camp Judson.
				+ If they were permitted to go unabated, they would destroy the whole complexion of the camp.

**Pic**

* + - * + But the only abatement method available was to cut down infected trees and burn them before healthy trees were infected.
		- So, in the early Spring of 2011 I went out there, along with a team from our church, to help out for a few days, cutting down trees. (Any excuse to use my chainsaw!)

**Pic**

* + - * But when I got there, I was surprised by what it was we were being asked to do.
			* Rather than cut down dead trees and haul them away, all the trees that were marked looked alive and healthy. I didn’t understand.
		- So it was explained to me.

**Pic**

* + - * It turned out that in the summer and fall the year before, the beetles had bored their way in the trunks of these trees and laid eggs before dying.
			* Soon, these eggs would start hatching, releasing tiny larva by the thousands that would then feed on the sap of the tree until the tree starved and died.
			* Then the beetles would exit the tree and spend the summer and fall burrowing their way into new trees,
				+ Thus, repeating the cycle, but now in exponentially larger numbers.

**Pic**

* + - So our job was to cut down these living trees in the Spring, before the larva hatched and began feasting so we could stop the cycle.
			* As the camp director told me, “these trees are dead, they just don’t know it yet.”
				+ So we cut down, carved them up, and put them in piles to be burned.

**Switch View**

* But in using this illustration on that Easter Sunday, I said this:
	+ In Jesus, there is resurrection...
		- You can’t reform something that is dead.
		- You don’t water and fertilize dead trees.
		- Dead is dead, and the only hope for the dead is resurrection.
* And all that’s true, but then I said something stupid. I said:
	+ Stop trying to fertilize and nourish a larva infested tree...it's dead already!
		- Let Christ cut it down, cut it up, and split it...
		- And let Him give you a new, resurrected life...

Do you see the problem?

**Switch View (dead logs)**

* I was not advocating resurrection, I was advocating replacement!
	+ Cutting down and chopping up the old tree and replacing it with a brand new, perfect tree.
* But that’s not resurrection!
	+ Resurrection is giving new life to the very thing that was dead.
		- Jesus does not cut down the tree, Jesus inhabits it.
	+ The Resurrected One, enters into our deadness and restores life to the dead places. For Jesus said..

*25 “I AM the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who LIVES AND BELIEVES in me shall never die.*

* + - Spiritually that happens all at once.
			* Our sin is forgiven, we are adopted into God’s family, we are given the Holy Spirit.
			* This is the very thing Paul was talking about when he speaks of everything becoming new.

*16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh...17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

* + - But in our bodies and in our souls (that place of the will and emotions), this resurrection is often more gradual.

**Switch View**

* + - * We often speak of “sanctification”, which is a fancy theological word for “being made holy”.
			* But what is sanctification if it is not the continuation of our resurrection.
				+ Bringing to life those areas of our lives have been deadened and warped as the result of the larva of sin, abuse and deception sapping our souls.

You see, the resurrection of Jesus was not just to save us for heaven! It was to raise us up here on earth as well.

* We are meant to be a sign and a wonder on the earth, as Lazarus was in Jerusalem and as Jesus was to Thomas.
	+ It is not a normal thing to see the resurrected dead walking this earth – and just like Thomas, people won’t believe it’s true until they can see it with their own eyes.
		- But you cannot see our spiritual resurrection from the outside, for it is a spiritual reality that the world most often does not recognize.
			* We don’t suddenly get a halo when we give our lives to Jesus.
		- But just as Thomas saw Jesus’ alive, yet with His wounds still visible, you CAN see the resurrection of the body and soul.
			* You see resurrection when Jesus sets an addict free,
				+ Or the betrayed are healed to trust and love again,
				+ When the workaholic suddenly begins loving and spending time with his children,
				+ When the angry are at peace, the miserly are made generous, the melancholy are rejoicing.
			* But these visible resurrections often don’t come all at once, but as Jesus heals the broken places in our lives that have led us to be addicts or workaholics or angry or miserly or melancholy.

So, let’s go back to the trees in the Black Hills – what would resurrection look like, if not cutting them down and replacing them?

**Switch View**

* It would mean the presence of the Resurrected Jesus filling the tree with life.
	+ Then, once secured (never to die again), it would involve the tree and Jesus identifying together where each of the larva are and extracting them.
		- And with each extraction comes a greater degree of resurrection, until finally, after removing all the larva, the tree is a picture of God’s original plan and purpose.

**Pic**

* + - * Yet still marked with the pock-holes and scars of the death the beetles had once brought.
			* But now proving to anyone who would put their fingers there that there truly is a resurrection of the dead, for they can see it and touch it in this living, thriving tree.

**Switch Views**

So, what does this look like for us as we walk with Jesus?

* Well, let me give a little testimony.
	+ These past couple of months, Nancy and I have been on a bit of a journey with the Lord, stepping into this resurrection pathway.
		- I’ll admit to you that there are things about me that I know are not reflective of our resurrected Lord.
			* Things about myself that have troubled me for years, but I have just chosen to live with, thinking they are just who I am.
		- But I have come to understand that Jesus desires more for me – to be free of blocks and fears and attitudes that have plagued me much of my life.
		- Most of these things I had just accepted as “who I was”.
			* Analytical, introverted, task oriented, not a people person and so on.
			* It’s the kind of things that personality inventories are designed to help you see in yourself and others so that you can learn function better together.
		- But having been a psychology major in college and having taught and even administered these profiles at times in my life,
			* I have come to believe that Psychology, as good as it is, only helps a person to discover their basic behavioral patterns and accept them.
		- But what those patterns have been formed out of brokenness, fear, self-doubt, arrogance, narcissism or the like?
			* What if these things have deadened my soul and continue to sap my spirit?
			* Should I just accept this “deadened state” that has been revealed in an inventory or survey as what God desires for me?
		- Or should I take these areas to Jesus as I discover them?
			* Should I allow Him to give me insight into the sources of my choices and bring healing to places that have been long broken?
			* Shouldn’t I permit Him to resurrect that portion of my life that has for so long been lived under a shadow?
	+ Maybe a specific example of what I’m talking about would help.
		- Every inventory I have ever taken has made it clear that I am an analytical, task-oriented introvert.
			* Yet, over the years I have found that such a “behavioral style” has kept me from enjoying close relationships and has produced a sort of “out of sight, out of mind” focus.
			* In other words, I can become SO focused in my office that I loose track of anything and everything else that goes on around me.
		- Now in our culture we tend to excuse that as an “absent minded professor” sort of thing.
			* But I can tell you that its lonely and damaging to relationships.
		- And I began to ask the Lord if this is just the me He created, or if at least some of these areas of my life could experience resurrection.
		- As I have explored this with the Lord, I have discovered that my unique history with my family and friends has produced in me:
			* Both a very human yearning to be valued for who I am, and not only for what I produce,
			* And yet also a wall in my relationships so that no one can get close enough to hurt me.
	+ Now I know what some of you are thinking – it all sounds like a lot of psychological mumbo, jumbo that’s better suited for a counselor than a sermon.
		- But here is where there is a difference between the work of a counselor and the work of Jesus.
			* While the counselor can help me see things like this and give me some strategies for how to makes changes to minimize the effects of it on my life…
			* Jesus can bring resurrection!
				+ He can fill my yearning to be loved unconditionally and thus free me to embrace others in the same way.
				+ And He can remove my fear of being hurt by “renewing my mind” and giving me grace to forgive those who have hurt me in the past – even those who are now gone.
	+ But while the scars will still be there – scars of past choices and broken relationships.
		- I will be free live the last few decades of my life free from the encumbrances that have plagued me for the last few decades of my life, because *“I have been raised with Christ in a resurrection like His!”*

Have you allowed Jesus into those deep recesses of your soul where lie the hurts and disappointments that have formed much of who you are and how you live today?

* Have you given Him the freedom to take you to those places and apply His truth and His love to your brokenness and resurrect the life He actually had designed for you in the first place?
	+ The earlier you step into His path of resurrection, the longer you have to enjoy the freedom He brings to this life.
	+ And the more impact you will have in sharing the true Gospel of Jesus with those around you.

For you see, there will always be Thomas’s in the world who will want to SEE resurrection and not just accept it because you say so.

* But even if Jesus’ body isn’t here for them to place their fingers into the nail-holes in his hands, or put their hands into the wound of his side.
	+ We are here – and we resurrected ones as well.
		- Not from physical death (not yet), but from spiritual death and the deadness of our souls.
		- Friends, we walk around as a resurrected people, scars and all – a people Jesus brought with Him from death to life by His grace and in His Spirit.
	+ And if they want to, they can inspect our wounds to see that resurrection is a real thing.
		- And perhaps they will let us lead them to the path of resurrection where they will meet “their Lord and their God, Jesus, Messiah!”

**Benediction**

*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his…that we too might walk in newness of life by His power and grace.*