

We don't know the outcome of these Coronavirus days. All we know is that we are in the midst of something. This is a different Easter – our plans or our lives have been tested. But know that we are in good company – we celebrate Resurrection Sunday and celebrate the Risen Savior because we know the outcome on the other side of the cross. The disciples were only seeing what was right in front of them - filled with the same concern, doubt and fear of what the outcome would be.

Jesus sees the place that we are at. Jesus came for the fearful, the concerned, the confused, and the lonely. He died for people just like me and just like you. When we look at the resurrection, we also need to look back. We see so much foretelling in the Old Testament. Even though Jesus told them, no one expected what was about to take place. The disciples didn't expect it.

Matthew 26:36-46 In the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples would have done things differently if they knew. They would have stayed awake. *Are you still sleeping? The hour has come....get up and let us be going.*

If the disciples had known, they would have been looking through a different lens. What am I not seeing beyond? What if I looked through a different lens? If we knew the outcome, we'd do things differently. When we don't know the outcome, we get distracted. They could only process what was in their midst. What is going on in the midst of our day to day? What are the distractions that come so easily when we don't know what to expect?

After Jesus was betrayed (around midnight after the Passover meal), the next 15 hours changed everything for the disciples. There were as many as six trials – resulting in Jesus' condemnation. Jesus wasn't supposed to die. Why "Good Friday"? Why is it good? To the disciples, there was nothing good about it – it was not the expected outcome. They all loved and followed Jesus, yet none of them believed Him. Belief – that part in all of us that struggles when hard things come – the part that seems impossible.

We know the outcome of Jesus' betrayal, but there are thousands of stories in our lives that don't have outcomes. We find ourselves in the same position that the disciples were in. We love Him, we follow Him, we believe in Him, but when it comes to seeing beyond, we have a hard time believing Him. For the disciples, everything pointed to a victory, yet on this day, they could only see death. What are we going through that might be wound up at a cross? Or at a hole in the ground? Or where only death can remain?

To the disciples, who had given up so much to Jesus, it was heartbreaking to see Him in the tomb. Am I looking at a tomb in my life? A tomb of a relationship, of finances, of a marriage, of a prodigal child? If all I can see is a tomb, do I question my ability to hear God?

Even Sunday's expectation from the followers of Jesus was that dead would remain dead. **Mark 16:1-3** *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"* No one expected resurrection. Death robs us of hope. **John 20:1-2** *Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."*

The same fear is in us today – in our story – has God been moved? Is God with us today? Know this...GOD HAS NOT MOVED. He is still working in the midst of His people. He is just as present now as the first moment that we invited Him in.

Luke 24:11-12 *But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.*

Peter went away wondering (astonished) - could God have really done what He said He would do? God, could it be that You could still do these things? For today, even though we hear the testimony of those walking thru dark days, we can still question whether God can be in the midst. The writers are documenting their own unwillingness to believe – how comforting to us who have questions. He still shows up in those places in my life. These words prove the validity of scripture – it includes the writer’s unbelief in the face of truth. Even in our own unbelief, Jesus still cares and still comes.

John 20:19 *So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.”* He just shows up in their fear. Just like today...we are locked in our houses worried about the future, fearful of what’s outside, different from how it was supposed to be. Jesus is showing up in the midst of locked homes and is declaring His peace! In the same way, Jesus is showing up in our worship, in our homes, bringing the same peace that He delivered to the disciples 2000 years ago. We can be grateful that His peace is not only within the walls of the church building but that He brings peace in every circumstance.

Luke 24:36 *While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be to you.”* Jesus was coming not with a question but with an invitation. **I Peter 5:7** *casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.* Jesus desires us to lay down our worries and our fears. Tell Him what we are worried about for this day. Jesus is still inviting the doubters, the skeptics, and the fearful and is offering a place to lay it down. Easter celebrates the miracle of resurrection - that Jesus conquered death, but are we missing the point? The point of it all is...You... *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.* **John 3:16** “Whoever” is you and me – all of us today. Whoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life. The strength to move beyond this situation resides in the hearts and lives of you and me that have invited Christ in.

Romans 8:11 *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.* The same Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead is bringing life to us. Our fear, our doubts, and our concerns come with an invitation to lay them down and allow the Spirit to produce the same life within our circumstances and within ourselves today.

Today is a turning point in our lives, in our nation, against this virus, in a child, in a restoration of faith, in the restoration of a marriage. Things will begin to shift in the Heavenly places – we don’t have the outcome, we have the promise. We don’t know the outcome, but we know the one who holds tomorrow. The invitation is to lay it down – put it at His feet.

Lay your life down - If you were to die today – do you know that your eternity would be in Heaven? Pray this...***Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.***

What are you worried or afraid of? What am I not seeing beyond? What if I looked through a different lens of trust?