



Easter is

GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

March 11, 2018

Discussion Guide

EASTER IS CHANGE

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- DO YOU THINK IT IS POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO CHANGE? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, TALK ABOUT THE ROLE AND EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD.
- READ JOHN 20.11-18 ALOUD. PAUSE. TRY TO IMAGINE THE SCENE, EXPERIENCING IT AS MARY. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SLOWLY.
- AS YOU READ THE TEXT, WHAT CHANGES DID JESUS'

RESURRECTION BRING ABOUT? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.

- DO ANY OF THESE CHANGES SURPRISE YOU? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE TODAY BELIEVE THAT THESE KINDS OF CHANGES ARE POSSIBLE? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN LIFE. ARE THERE AREAS IN WHICH YOU NEED TO EXPERIENCE CHANGE? WHAT HAS THE EXPERIENCE OF SEEKING CHANGE IN THESE AREAS BEEN LIKE FOR YOU?
- WHAT HOPE, IF ANY, DOES JESUS' INVITATION TO MARY AND HIS MESSAGE TO HIS DISCIPLES PROVIDE WITH RESPECT TO THESE AREAS IN NEED OF CHANGE?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY DISCUSSING WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE TO OPEN YOUR LIFE TO GOD TO RECEIVE THE CHANGE HIS RESURRECTION HAS MADE POSSIBLE.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, ALL MEDITERRANEAN CULTURES WERE ANDROCENTRIC AND HIGHLY PATRIARCHAL. AT EVERY LEVEL OF SOCIETY, MEN WERE MORE POWERFUL AND CONSIDERED BY ALL TO BE SUPERIOR TO WOMEN. WHILE WOMEN OF HIGH STATUS WERE ABLE TO OWN PROPERTY, RUN BUSINESSES, AND SERVE AS PATRONS IN SOME CONTEXTS, PARTICULARLY ASIA MINOR, THEY WERE UNABLE TO ASCEND TO PLACES OF REAL POWER BECAUSE THEY WERE KEPT FROM HOLDING ELECTED OFFICES. IN GENERAL, WOMEN WERE VIEWED BY MEN TO BE SOMETHING OF A BURDEN AND DANGER, CAPABLE OF BRINGING GREAT SHAME UPON A FATHER AND FAMILY.

THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN WAS NOT MUCH DIFFERENT IN JEWISH CIRCLES. THIS IS SURPRISING BECAUSE OF THE ELEVATED ROLE OF SPECIFIC WOMEN IN JEWISH HISTORY SUCH AS DEBORAH (JUDGES

4) AND ESTHER (ESTHER 1-10). HOWEVER, WOMEN HAD LITTLE FREEDOM IN JEWISH SOCIETY. SOME RABBIS VIEWED THEM WITH CONTEMPT AND NO RABBI WOULD CONSIDER TEACHING A WOMAN. BEN SIRA, A RABBI FROM THE 2ND CENTURY B.C.E. DEMONSTRATES THE TYPICAL JEWISH VIEW OF WOMEN AS SOMETHING OF A BURDEN TO MEN IN HIS MEDITATION AS A FATHER OF A DAUGHTER WHEN HE WROTE:

A DAUGHTER IS A TREASURE THAT KEEPS HER FATHER WAKEFUL, AND WORRY OVER HER DRIVES AWAY SLEEP: LEST IN HER YOUTH SHE REMAIN UNMARRIED, OR WHEN SHE IS MARRIED, LEST SHE BE CHILDLESS; WHILE UNMARRIED, LEST SHE BE DEFILED, OR IN HER HUSBAND'S HOUSE, LEST SHE PROVE UNFAITHFUL; LEST SHE BECOME PREGNANT IN HER FATHER'S HOUSE, OR BE STERILE IN THAT OF HER HUSBAND. MY SON, KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON YOUR DAUGHTER, LEST SHE MAKE YOU A LAUGHINGSTOCK FOR YOUR ENEMIES, A BYWORD IN THE CITY AND THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE, AN OBJECT OF DERISION IN PUBLIC GATHERINGS. SEE THAT THERE IS NO LATTICE IN HER ROOM, OR SPOT THAT OVERLOOKS THE APPROACHES TO THE HOUSE. DO NOT LET HER REVEAL HER BEAUTY TO ANY MALE, OR SPEND HER TIME WITH MARRIED WOMEN; FOR JUST AS MOTHS COME FROM GARMENTS, SO A WOMAN'S WICKEDNESS COMES FROM A WOMAN. BETTER A MAN'S HARSHNESS THAN A WOMAN'S INDULGENCE, A FRIGHTENED DAUGHTER THAN ANY DISGRACE. — ECCLESIASTICUS 42.9-14 (NRSV)

IN SPITE OF THE PREVAILING CONCEPT OF WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, JESUS DEMONSTRATED A MARKEDLY DIFFERENT VIEW. AS A RABBI, JESUS NOT ONLY ADDRESSED AND TAUGHT WOMEN (JOHN 4), BUT HE MADE WOMEN RECIPIENTS OF HIS MINISTRY (LUKE 13.10-17), NUMBERED THEM AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS (LUKE 8.1-3), AND COUNTED THEM AS HIS INTIMATE FRIENDS (LUKE 10.38-42; JOHN 11). JESUS FIRST APPEARED TO WOMEN AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND CHOSE TO USE A WOMAN AS THE MOUTHPIECE TO DECLARE HIS RESURRECTION (JOHN 20.1-18). JESUS' TREATMENT OF WOMEN WAS RADICAL, TRANSCENDING THE TRADITIONAL BARRIERS AND VIEWS OF HIS DAY. IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT THE EARLY CHURCH CONTINUED SIMILAR TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES OF ITS EXISTENCE BEFORE CULTURAL VIEWS PREVAILED AND RELEGATED WOMEN TO A PLACE IN THE CHURCH IN KEEPING WITH THEIR PLACE IN CULTURE, A REALITY WHICH HAS ONLY ONCE AGAIN BEEN CHALLENGED WITHIN THE LAST 50 YEARS, AND THEN ONLY WITHIN CERTAIN PENTECOSTAL AND MAINLINE DENOMINATIONS. THE CHURCH'S SHIFTING POSITION ON WOMEN OCCURRED AS IT SOUGHT TO FIND ACCEPTANCE IN THE WIDER CULTURE OF ITS TIME IN THE 3RD CENTURY, PART OF A LARGER MOVEMENT CALLED "CONSTANTINIANISM."

IN THE EARLY CHURCH, WOMEN HELD POSITIONS OF POWER AND AUTHORITY. THEY SERVED AS PROPHETS (ACTS 2.18) AND APOSTLES (ROMANS 16.7), LED LOCAL CONGREGATIONS (ACTS 18.18-19, 26), AND SERVED AS DEACONS (ROMANS 16.1-2). WOMEN WERE EVEN GIVEN GREAT PROTECTION IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD CODES (EPHESIANS 5.21-33).

CONTEXTUALLY, SOME OF THE STRUGGLES AT CORINTH SEEM TO BE A RESULT OF THE CHURCH NOT QUITE KNOWING HOW TO NAVIGATE THE FREEDOM WOMEN WERE GIVEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH (1 CORINTHIANS 14.26-40), REQUIRING PAUL TO PROVIDE RULES TO GOVERN THE WAY THE WOMEN IN THAT SPECIFIC CONGREGATION WERE BEHAVING. THE FREEDOM GIVEN TO WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH WAS IN PART A CONTINUATION OF THE TRAJECTORY SET IN JESUS' MINISTRY, BUT WAS ALSO THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL BELIEF THAT IN CHRIST TRADITIONAL HIERARCHAL BOUNDARIES HAD BEEN DESTROYED (GALATIANS 3.26-29; EPHESIANS 2.19-22). SOME MODERN AND ANCIENT INTERPRETERS POINT TO PASSAGES SUCH AS 1 TIMOTHY 2.11-15 AS BIBLICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTING A MALE-DOMINATED HIERARCHY WITHIN THE CHURCH. HOWEVER, TO DEAL HONESTLY WITH TEXTS SUCH AS THESE IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT, LIKE THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE, PAUL IS ADDRESSING A SPECIFIC SITUATION WITHIN A SPECIFIC LOCAL CHURCH AND NOT GIVING GUIDANCE FOR HOW THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE WAS TO FUNCTION. THIS PASSAGE IN 1 TIMOTHY CERTAINLY REFLECTS A LOCAL ISSUE WHICH PAUL SOUGHT TO CORRECT, THE SPECIFIC DETAILS OF WHICH ARE NOW LOST. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT IN 1 TIMOTHY, PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING DEACONS AND OVERSEERS ARE WRITTEN IN SUCH A MANNER GRANTING WOMEN ACCESS TO THESE POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CHURCH (1 TIMOTHY 3.11). THEREFORE, CONTEXTUALLY, PAUL DOES NOT SEEK TO REINFORCE THE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL MALE-HIERARCHY BUT MODIFIES HIS GUIDANCE TO ADDRESS A UNIQUE ISSUE WITHIN THAT CONTEXT.

THE TEXT

JOHN 20.11-18: RESURRECTION LIFE IS A CHANGED LIFE

THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF JESUS TO HIS DISCIPLES ARE PART OF JOHN'S MESSAGE INTENDED TO LEAD HIS READERS TO A FAITH WHICH RESULTS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE IN THE PRESENT (JOHN 20.31). THE EARLY CHURCH QUICKLY REALIZED THAT WHILE JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS HAD DEALT WITH THEIR BONDAGE TO SIN, HIS RESURRECTION HAD OPENED THE DOOR TO THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFE IN THE PRESENT FREE FROM THE EFFECTS OF THIS BONDAGE (ROMANS 6.1-7). RATHER THAN HAVING TO WAIT TO EXPERIENCE ETERNAL LIFE, JESUS' RESURRECTION MADE ETERNAL LIFE A PRESENT REALITY AVAILABLE TO ALL WHO ORIENTED THEMSELVES IN FAITH AROUND JESUS. IN THE SAME WAY THAT PAUL'S DISCUSSION OF THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY OUTLINED ASPECTS OF THIS ETERNAL LIFE FOR BELIEVERS IN THE FUTURE, JOHN'S RECOUNTING OF THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF JESUS OUTLINED ASPECTS OF THIS ETERNAL LIFE FOR BELIEVERS IN THE PRESENT. JESUS' RESURRECTED BODY AND INTERACTIONS DEMONSTRATES WHAT LIFE CAN BE LIKE, A TRUTH UNDERSCORED BY JESUS' INVITATIONS TO HIS DISCIPLES IN THESE APPEARANCES.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE JOHN RECOUNTS IS THAT OF JESUS TO MARY OF MAGDALA, A VILLAGE IN GALILEE. MARY WAS ONE OF THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS BOTH AS A DISCIPLE AND MINISTRY SUPPORTER.

HER INVOLVEMENT WITH JESUS' MINISTRY CAME AS THE RESULT OF HIS CASTING SEVEN DEMONS OUT OF MARY (LUKE 8.1-3). MARY WAS ONE OF THE WOMEN WHO HAD GONE TO THE TOMB TO ANOINT JESUS' BODY (LUKE 24.1-12; JOHN 20.1-11). HOWEVER, MARY AND THE OTHER WOMEN DISCOVERED THE STONE WHICH COVERED HIS TOMB HAD BEEN REMOVED AND THE BODY OF THEIR LORD MISSING. IN DISTRESS, MARY AND THE OTHERS HAD REPORTED THEIR FINDINGS TO THE DISCIPLES. JOHN NOTES THAT HE AND PETER RAN TO THE TOMB TO VERIFY THE WOMEN'S REPORT. HOWEVER, HE AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED (JOHN 20.9-10). RATHER, AFTER SEEING THE EMPTY TOMB, HE AND PETER RETURNED TO THEIR HIDING PLACE (JOHN 20.10, 19) LEAVING MARY ALONE AT THE EMPTY TOMB.

HAVING BEEN LEFT ALONE, MARY STOOD WEeping OUTSIDE THE TOMB, DISTRAUGHT OVER THE MISSING BODY OF JESUS. HER REACTION HERE AND THROUGHOUT THE SCENE DEMONSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESENCE OF A BODY IN THE PROCESS OF GRIEVING. IN GRIEVING, WE MOURN THE LOSS OF A PERSON WHOM WE LOVED BODILY. TO GRIEVE WITHOUT THE BODY IN SOME WAYS SHORT-CIRCUITS THE GRIEVING PROCESS BECAUSE WE ARE LEFT WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY WE LOVED AND ARE THEREFORE UNABLE TO COME TO A SENSE OF CLOSURE WITH OUR GRIEF.

AS SHE STOOD WEeping, MARY GLANCED INTO JESUS' EMPTY TOMB ONLY TO DISCOVER IT WAS NO LONGER EMPTY. TWO ANGELIC BEINGS WERE SEATED UPON THE LEDGE WHERE JESUS' BODY HAD FORMERLY LAID. THESE ANGELIC BEINGS SPEAK TO MARY, INQUIRING AS TO THE NATURE OF HER SORROW. WHILE SOME INTERPRETERS VIEW THEIR QUESTION TO BE SOMETHING OF A REBUKE, THIS IS NOT NECESSARY AND SUCH A VIEW IS GENERALLY INFORMED BY A VIEW OF GOD WHICH IS SOMEWHAT JUDGMENTAL, CONDEMNING THE DISCIPLES FOR NOT UNDERSTANDING THE RESURRECTION RIGHT AWAY. MOST LIKELY, THE ANGELS ARE DEMONSTRATING COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR MARY.

MARY RESPONDS HONESTLY THAT SHE IS DISTRESSED BY THE ABSENCE OF JESUS' BODY, PERHAPS ASSUMING THAT HIS ENEMIES HAVE TAKEN HIS BODY AWAY AS PUNISHMENT. HOWEVER, BEFORE MARY CAN RESPOND FURTHER TO THESE ANGELIC BEINGS, SHE SENSES SOMEONE BEHIND HER AND TURNS AROUND TO DISCOVER A MAN. BLINDED BY HER TEARS, MARY DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THAT THIS MAN IS NONE OTHER THAN JESUS. RATHER, SHE ASSUMES HE IS THE GARDENER AND THEREFORE MUST KNOW THE PLACE WHERE JESUS' BODY WAS TAKEN. WHEN THIS MAN ALSO INQUIRES AS TO THE SOURCE OF MARY'S TEARS, SHE QUICKLY INQUIRES AS TO THE LOCATION OF JESUS' BODY AND OFFERS TO PERSONALLY RETRIEVE IT. JESUS RESPONDS BY CALLING MARY'S NAME, AND AT THE SOUND OF HER NAME UTTERED BY JESUS, MARY RECOGNIZES THE ONE WITH WHOM SHE IS SPEAKING.

MARY'S RESPONSE IS ONE OF PURE JOY. SHE CALLS OUT HER OWN NAME FOR JESUS, "RABBI," AND RUSHES TO EMBRACE HIM. MARY'S RESPONSE IS UNDERSTANDABLY HUMAN AND APPROPRIATE. THE ONE WHICH SHE THOUGHT WAS LOST HAS BEEN FOUND. IN HER MIND,

THINGS CAN NOW GO BACK TO THE WAY THEY WERE BEFORE, A REALITY EMPHASIZED WITH HER USE OF THE NAME "RABBI." MARY ASSUMES THAT JESUS HAS RETURNED TO BEGIN HIS TEACHING MINISTRY ONCE MORE AND SHE HOLDS ON TO HIM NOT JUST IN JOY BUT TO ENSURE HE DOES NOT LEAVE ONCE MORE. HOWEVER, JESUS ENCOURAGES MARY TO LET GO OF HIM. THINGS CANNOT GO BACK TO THE WAY THEY ONCE WERE. JESUS HAS NO INTENTION OF RETURNING TO HIS TEACHING MINISTRY, BUT HE INTENDS TO MOVE FORWARD TOWARD HIS FATHER. JESUS' STATEMENT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT OUTLINES THE TRAJECTORY OF A RESURRECTED LIFE. A RESURRECTED LIFE DOES NOT RETURN TO ITS FORMER HUMAN STATE NO MATTER HOW WONDERFUL OR GLORIOUS. JESUS' RESURRECTED LIFE ONLY MOVES FORWARD TOWARD GREATER INTIMACY IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS FATHER, THE LIFE WHICH WAS THE FATHER'S ORIGINAL INTENTION. IN OTHER WORDS, A RESURRECTED LIFE IS DIFFERENT. IT IS A CHANGED LIFE, CHANGED IN THE DIRECTION OF GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENTION.

HAVING OUTLINED THE TRAJECTORY OF HIS OWN RESURRECTED LIFE, JESUS INVITES MARY AND HIS DISCIPLES INTO THIS SAME TRAJECTORY WITH RESPECT TO THEIR LIVES. JESUS INVITES MARY TO FIND HIS DISCIPLES AND EXTEND A MESSAGE REGARDING HIS RESURRECTION. TO INVITE MARY, A WOMAN, TO ANNOUNCE THIS GOOD NEWS WAS TO FILL A ROLE OF AUTHORITY AS AN EMISSARY OF JESUS, A POSITION OF POWER OVER THE DISCIPLES! THIS INVITATION DEFIES AND TRANSCENDS THE TRADITIONAL ROLES FOR WOMEN IN JESUS' DAY, A REALITY WHICH DEMONSTRATES THE FORWARD TRAJECTORY FOR MARY'S RESURRECTED LIFE. HER LIFE CAN CHANGE, CAN MOVE FORWARD TOWARD GREATER FREEDOM. LIKEWISE, JESUS' MESSAGE FOR HIS DISCIPLES IMPLIES THIS SAME TRAJECTORY FOR THEM. JESUS' MESSAGE INDICATES THAT HE NOW VIEWS THEM AS BROTHERS AND THAT THIS STATUS BRINGS THEM INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HEAVENLY FATHER AS THEIR FATHER. TO BECOME A BROTHER WITH JESUS AND THEREBY A SON OF GOD INDICATES AN ELEVATED STATUS FOR THESE MEN OF GALILEE, ONE OF UPWARD TRAJECTORY. CHANGE. BOTH THE CHANGE EXTENDED TO MARY AND THE DISCIPLES ARE MOVEMENTS TOWARD GOD, TOWARD THE LIFE HE INTENDED. FOR MARY, THIS IS A CHANGE TOWARD THE LIFE ORIGINALLY MEANT FOR WOMEN AS BEINGS CREATED ON EQUAL FOOTING WITH MEN (GENESIS 2.18-25). FOR THE DISCIPLES, THIS IS A CHANGE TOWARD THE LIFE ORIGINALLY MEANT FOR ALL PEOPLE, BEINGS CREATED TO LIVE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (GENESIS 1.26-27).

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

FOR CHRISTIANS, EASTER IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST DAYS OF THE YEAR. IT IS ON THIS DAY THAT WE CELEBRATE JESUS' RESURRECTION. EVERY YEAR WE PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS AND THROW A HUGE PARTY. BUT WHY? WHY IS EASTER SUCH A BIG DEAL? I HAVE ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT EASTER AND THE EMPHASIS WE PLACE UPON IT. WHEN I DARED ASK THE QUESTION, I WAS ALWAYS TOLD EASTER WAS A BIG DEAL BECAUSE JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND THAT WAS HUGE. WHEN I WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO ASK WHY THIS WAS SO "HUGE," I WAS QUICKLY TOLD THAT JESUS' RESURRECTION MEANT THAT ONE DAY I TOO WOULD LIVE

AFTER DEATH. JESUS HAD CONQUERED DEATH, SO I TOO DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT DEATH. THERE WAS LIFE AFTER DEATH. THAT WAS A BIG DEAL, SO I SHOULD GET WITH THE PROGRAM AND START PARTYYING.

I AM NOT DENYING THAT LIVING AFTER DEATH IS A BIG DEAL. THE OLDER I GET AND THE MORE I EXPERIENCE THE STRUGGLES WITH MY STILL'S DISEASE, THE MORE LIFE AFTER DEATH APPEALS TO ME. I AM ALL FOR A RESURRECTED LIFE AND A RESURRECTED BODY FREE FROM PAIN AND SORROW AND STILL'S DISEASE (1 CORINTHIANS 15). HOWEVER, I AM LEFT ASKING ABOUT NOW. WHAT ABOUT NOW? I AM LIVING NOW. DO I HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL I DIE FOR THE GOOD STUFF JESUS' RESURRECTION MAKES POSSIBLE? IS EASTER JUST A PARTY ABOUT THE FUTURE OR ARE WE CELEBRATING SOMETHING MORE?

THE TYPICAL ANSWER IS EASTER IS REALLY ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE, BUT I AM NOT CONVINCED THIS IS TRUE. CERTAINLY, JESUS' RESURRECTION DEMONSTRATES THAT THERE IS LIFE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH, BUT I AM GROWING MORE CONVINCED THAT LIFE IS AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME BEFORE DEATH. I AM GROWING MORE CERTAIN THAT THERE IS THIS THING CALLED "LIFE BEFORE LIFE AFTER DEATH." I THINK THIS IS THE POINT PAUL WAS TRYING TO MAKE IN ROMANS 6.1-7. SIMPLY PUT, PAUL SAID, BECAUSE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION WE CAN BEGIN TO LIVE THE LIFE GOD INTENDED FOR US IN THE PRESENT. WE DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR IT. IN OTHER WORDS, THE GOOD LIFE JESUS' RESURRECTION DEMONSTRATES IS SOMETHING WE HAVE ACCESS TO RIGHT NOW. THAT IS A WONDERFUL AND POWERFUL MESSAGE, SOMETHING WORTH CELEBRATING. BUT WHAT DOES THAT LIFE LOOK LIKE? WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO HAVE ACCESS TO LIFE AFTER DEATH RIGHT NOW?

I THINK JOHN GIVES US SOME GLIMPSES IN THE LAST TWO CHAPTERS OF HIS GOSPEL. PERHAPS THIS IS THE POINT OF THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES IN THE FIRST PLACE, GLIMPSES NOT JUST INTO THE REALITY THAT JESUS WAS ALIVE BUT GLIMPSES INTO WHAT LIFE JESUS WAS MAKING POSSIBLE. THE FIRST GLIMPSE HE GIVES US IS THAT OF A CHANGED LIFE. THE RESURRECTED JESUS HAD A LIFE WHICH WAS CHANGING, MOVING TOWARD THE EXPERIENCE THE FATHER ORIGINALLY INTENDED FOR HIM. THE RESURRECTED JESUS WAS MOVING TO THE WAY HIS LIFE WAS MEANT TO BE, IN INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH THE FATHER. IF JESUS' LIFE SHOWS ME WHAT MY LIFE CAN BE, THEN HIS RESURRECTED LIFE SAYS I CAN MOVE TOWARD A NEW LIFE, LIFE THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE. I CAN CHANGE. I AM NOT TRAPPED BY THE DYSFUNCTION OF MY FAMILY OF ORIGIN. I AM NOT BOUND BY THE DISAPPOINTING CHOICES I HAVE MADE. I AM NOT FOREVER CONSIGNED TO BE A PERSON WHO WRESTLES WITH FEAR, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION. I CAN MOVE AWAY FROM THESE THINGS. THE RESURRECTION HAS MADE THIS POSSIBLE, AND JESUS EXTENDS AN INVITATION TO STEP TOWARD THIS LIFE. THAT IS SOMETHING WORTH CELEBRATING.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WE ALL WANT TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS WORLD IN A SUCCESSFUL WAY. SCRIPTURE CALLS THIS ABILITY WISDOM. SO, WHERE DO WE FIND THIS WISDOM? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PLACES WE CAN LOOK. WE CAN TURN TO OUR EXPERIENCE, THE TEACHING OF OTHERS, OR SIMPLY APPLY AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF BRAIN CELLS TO A DILEMMA OR ISSUE AT HAND. HOWEVER, IF WE WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THAT IS, IF WE WANT TO NAVIGATE LIFE IN A WAY WHICH LEADS TO JOY WE MUST SEEK WISDOM FROM GOD. APART FROM THIS WISDOM WE WILL FIND OURSELVES EASILY OVERWHELMED BY THE MANY POSSIBLE PATHS WE MIGHT CHOOSE. WE GET STUCK. GETTING WISDOM FROM GOD IS NOT DIFFICULT. GOD SHARES THIS WISDOM WHEN WE PURSUE HIM. THIS IS WHERE WE RUN INTO THE PROBLEM. IN OUR PRIDE, WE DO NOT PURSUE GOD. WE DO NOT FEEL WE NEED HIM. WE CAN FIGURE IT OUT ON OUR OWN. . .UNTIL WE REALIZE WE CAN'T.

SO, HOW DO WE PUT DOWN OUR PRIDE TO PURSUE GOD AND HIS WISDOM? WORSHIP IS THE SURPRISING ANSWER. WHEN I MENTION WORSHIP, I AM NOT REFERRING TO WHAT WE CALL WORSHIP TODAY. MODERN WORSHIP IS ROOTED IN CONSUMERISM AND THEREFORE IS FOCUSED ON EXPERIENCE AND INNOVATION. ANCIENT, BIBLICAL WORSHIP IS ROOTED IN THE REPEATED REHEARSAL OF GOD'S STORY WHICH INVITES THE WORSHIPER TO REMEMBER AND REALIGN HIS HEART. WE USE THE WORD LITURGY TO DESCRIBE THIS KIND OF WORSHIP. LITURGY IS JUST THE INTENTIONAL REHEARSAL OF GOD'S STORY IN A PARTICULAR MANNER. LITURGY CAN INVOLVE ANYTHING FROM THE REGULAR RHYTHM OF READING THROUGH THE BIBLE TO THE REHEARSAL OF A SCRIPTED CELEBRATION OF PRAYER. WHATEVER THE FORM, LITURGICAL WORSHIP INVOLVES THE INTENTIONAL REHEARSAL OF GOD'S STORY SO WE REMEMBER WHO HE IS, WHERE HE IS GOING, AND WHERE WE FIT SO THAT WE MIGHT REALIGN OUR LIVES WITH HIS. IT IS THIS WORSHIP WHICH CALLS US BACK TO CENTER, BACK TO THE PURSUIT OF GOD AND HIS WISDOM.

THIS WEEK WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO THINK OF A WAY YOU MIGHT MAKE THIS KIND OF WORSHIP PART OF YOUR DAILY LIFE. PERHAPS IT INVOLVES PARTICIPATING IN THE JOURNEY OR REGULARLY LISTENING TO A WORSHIP CD AT A SPECIFIC TIME OF THE DAY. YOU ARE FREE TO STRUCTURE THIS IN ANY WAY GOD LEADS SO LONG AS IT IS REGULAR AND INTENTIONAL. PAY ATTENTION TO THE AFFECT THIS HAS ON HOW YOU THINK AND NAVIGATE YOUR DAILY LIFE. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER JOURNALING YOUR EXPERIENCES.



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