



“The Road to Resurrection: Drawing Nearer to Jesus”

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The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Matthew 28:5-6

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. Revelation 3:20



Some experiences in life seem to take all the wind out of us. They sap our energy, suffocate our enthusiasm and steal/shatter our expectation. We're left listless, lame and loathsome. We're fearful about the present and the future. We're frozen, paralyzed by the pain, shock, or disappointment of it all.

Whatever the life altering event, it disrupts our rest and has the potential to deplete our resources. Hopelessness moves in and brings its kin: despair, disillusionment and depression. As much as we would like to hide from, ignore or self-medicate this new, dark reality, we do so to our own peril. Isolation, starvation, intoxication, are among the many escape routes traveled, resulting, more often than not, in more extensive deception and destruction. There is a safe path, however, that can lead to light, liberty and laughter again.

Acknowledge Grief Together

It begins with acknowledging the grief we share. Grief stricken and tormented by memories of the gruesome suffering their master, teacher and friend had undergone just days earlier (Matt. 27:55-56), the women found little consolation throughout the weekend. Coming to grips with their grief, they discussed next steps. Since they were powerless to rescue Jesus from the persistent crowd or the cross itself, perhaps they could pay respect to Him by washing and anointing His body. Surely, they could do more than sit and sulk in sorrow.

As we wade through this unprecedented period in our personal and national history, many are grieving the loss of loved ones. Consciously or not, many more are grieving the loss of mobility, money and meaning. Perhaps most, however, are grieving the loss of *life as we've known it*. We may be confined, feel confused or lack connection. But, we have choices as to our response. We can choose to sit in isolation with anxiety, anger or apathy. Or, we can choose to embrace and experience this journey, this loss, together. The good news is, like these women, we can do *something*. We can decide to take one step at a time, each step *forward*, in *faith*, toward our new *future*. And, we can do it together.

Approach Graves Together

Bravely, Mary Magdalene and Mary took action. They took action in an unlikely direction, one that would give validation to their disruption. They approached the tomb – together. Most likely, they were oblivious to the station of the one hundred soldiers on the burial grounds. The courage needed for this hour, therefore, was not to face soldiers, but symbols. They required an intestinal strength to disempower that shrine of sorrow, the sepulcher, and its seal of separation, the stone. They moved out early in the morning (Matt 28:1) with an earnest expectation that someone, somehow would help them move the stone. Never in their wildest dream, though, would they have expected God to do it – and much less *like* He did it. I mean, an earthquake (v.2)? To move one stone? Can't you hear our contemporary "church" critics saying, "It don't take all that!" To their amazement, not only was help awaiting them, but hope, as well. How often might we have forfeited divinely positioned help and hope because we were too afraid, agitated or apprehensive to approach the graves, i.e., symbols of death, disability or detachment, we'd prefer to deny.

In these trying weeks or months, let's be courageous enough to own and name our losses. This global crisis has cost us something. For some, its cost everything. At least, so it seems. Family, income, health care, security, education, recreation, housing, etc. Seemingly, everything. But wait!! Someone penned these words years ago, "... as long as there's God, I have everything I need." Often devastation opens us up to fresh, new realities and opportunities. Imagination and its twin, innovation, soar as we are forced to contemplate new ways of being and doing, grounded in the total sufficiency of God.

Accept Grace Together

Yes, imagination is a gift from God. The ability to see beyond, to envision better, no matter how awesome or awful things are presently, is an expression of God's grace. Made in His image, it's an innate ability, much like His own. As often as we have used it in ways that displease, disobey and are even intended to displace Him, God continues to bless us with it. That's grace! And, we can use His gift, under His guidance, to His glory in limitless ways.

There are other manifestations of God's grace available to us, each of which is essential in successfully navigating life's unexpected detours. One such essential is the grace of presence – His presence. Look back over your life and try to count the times when God directly or indirectly assured you of His promised presence – smack dab in the midst of some danger – some difficulty – some devastation.

When we decide to face our fears, faults, failures, foes, and our futures with faith in God, we always stand to discover more of this amazing grace. We see it in our text. These sisters, undeterred by the earthquake or the military strewn motionless upon the ground (v.4), press their way to see their leader. And, they are rewarded by this very grace. First, greeted by His representative presence (vv.5-7), announcing His triumph over death, then, by the resurrected Christ Himself, on their way to Galilee (vv. 9-10), the women accepted and embraced this grace together. In just that moment, their joy, peace and hope were resuscitated, raised, resurrected.

For you, dear friend, this same grace awaits. No matter the trauma, trial or tragedy we've encountered, the Easter event informs us that His grace is sufficient to help us rise again. Even when our distance is not social, but spiritual, He reminds us in Revelation 3:20 that this grace awaits. Just acknowledge the

gentle knock, answer in faith, and welcome in the gift of His presence. Everything stands to change for the better when Christ is invited to be intimately and intentionally involved in our lives.

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives all fear is gone.
Because I know who holds the future,
life is worth living just because He lives.*