

## **Because He Lives: What Christ's Resurrection Means for Me**

1. Warm up: On Sunday, Jeff reminded us of that epic scene in *Steel Magnolias* where M'Lynn's grief at the death of her daughter comes tumbling out. What's one of the saddest scenes you've ever seen in a movie?
  
2. Life is full of heartbreak and challenge. It's against that backdrop that on Sunday we talked about the relevance of Jesus' resurrection for us today. Jeff suggested three critical points of relevance, beginning with death itself. We face no greater enemy in life than death.
  - a. We've all experienced the loss of somebody so precious we don't know how we can go on without them. The pain threatens to shatter our soul. That's what M'Lynn experienced with the death of her daughter. It's what Mary experienced with the death of her son Jesus. For you personally, what's the most shattering death you've experienced? How did that death affect you?
  
  - b. Think again about the person whose death most shattered you. Jeff asked us each to imagine that after the funeral of that person, when you walked out into the parking lot to get in your car, just as you were about to open the door, there they stood (that person you lost) just a few feet away from you, smiling and saying, "I'm ok, and you're going to be ok too," then they vanished. How would you feel? What would you feel? Would you dare to tell others what you experienced?
  
  - c. What we felt in the foregoing imaginary exercise is what Jesus' closest companions experienced three days after his death. Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, but when she told the others, "[Her] words seemed to them like an idle tale, and they did not believe her." Luke 24:11. Why do you think they doubted Mary? If you'd been there, how do you think you would have responded to Mary's news?
  
  - d. Jeff said he's glad the other disciples doubted at first because it gives him confidence that these early believers were skeptics who demanded abundant proof before they'd believe something so fantastic as that someone had risen from the dead. Are you glad they doubted at first? Why or why not?
  
  - e. I Corinthians 15:20 says, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." In other words, Jesus' resurrection is proof that death is not the end – that that the soul does go on, that you and me and those we love, though we die, yet we shall live. In support of this, Jeff shared a couple stories of people in our time who've encountered deceased loved ones. Have you ever had such an experience or known someone who has? If so, tell us about it.

3. From all the foregoing, we drew our first key point. **We celebrate Easter because Jesus became our living proof that death is not the end – that you and me and those we love, though we die, yet we shall live.** But then Jeff went on to point out that, if death is not the end, that doesn't just give us assurance of the life to come, it also completely changes the lens through which we see our present life. There's a lot of suffering here on planet earth. If this life is all we've got, it's hard to make sense of all the suffering. But if this life is simply a preparatory prelude to eternal life, all the hardship suddenly seems to serve an important purpose, *i.e.*, refining our souls and preparing us for the glory to come.
  - a. Jeff invited us to consider the analogy of getting shots at the doctor's office. Most of us hate needles, but we voluntarily get shots because we know the pain is temporary and the shots will make the rest of our existence so much better. What do you think of that analogy? Does it make sense to you? Why or why not?
  - b. Read the two quotes printed on p. 3 – one from Elizabeth Kubler Ross and the other from Scott Sauls. Do you think they're on to something? Is it true that suffering has the power to shape us into far more beautiful creatures? Your thoughts?
  - c. II Corinthians 4:16 says, "Do not lose heart. . . . For this slight momentary affliction [*i.e.*, life on earth] is **preparing us** for an eternal weight of glory beyond measure." When in life have you experienced great suffering or hardship and come through that experience stronger, better, and more beautiful in your soul? Tell us what happened and how it affected you.
  - d. Jeff pulled out the timeline-of-eternity string again. When you see that illustration how does it affect you? What thoughts or feelings does it evoke?
4. From the foregoing we drew a second point. **We celebrate Easter because it helps us reframe our suffering, realizing it's a momentary thing that helps prepare us for all of eternity.** But that then led us to the final point, which we drew from our Scripture reading. Read Luke 24:13-35, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Why do you think these two disciples didn't recognize Jesus until the very end of their encounter? What are the possibilities?
  - b. The experience these two disciples had with Jesus is a powerful reminder to us that after his resurrection, Jesus didn't say, "Peace out. I'll see ya in the next life. Good luck down here on planet earth." Instead, he remains among us, walking with us, talking with us, and promising us, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20. Here then is the third point: **We celebrate Easter because it means Jesus is still right here with us, guiding, encouraging, and empowering us.** Tell us about a time when you've experienced the presence of Jesus in your life in a profound way.

## **Elizabeth Kubler Ross**

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who had known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation and sensitivity and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep love and concern. Beautiful people don’t just happen.”

## **Scott Sauls**

“Many of the world’s greatest souls became their best selves not in spite of, but because of, their distress. The great hymn writer Cowper wrote hopeful hymns and the great artist Van Gogh brushed epic paintings while contemplating suicide. Charles Spurgeon preached some of his best sermons while depressed. Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King Jr. battled ‘melancholy.’ The great composer Beethoven went deaf. C.S. Lewis buried his wife after a short, cancer-ridden marriage. Elie Wiesel and Corrie Ten Boom survived the holocaust. Joni Eareckson Tada lost her ability to walk in a tragic accident. John Perkins endured jail, beatings, and death threats from white supremacists.”

## **Luke 24:13-35**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup>And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ <sup>19</sup>He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.’ <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and . . . told [the others] what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.