

May 1, 2022

“Considering Easter”
Luke 24:1-12

FCF: Thinking we can just “move on” past Easter
PROPOSITION: (anchor) Easter is an historical event
 (magnet) that presses us to consider some things.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever felt pressured to move past something too quickly? Perhaps you weren’t given the time to take in the exhibits at a museum or a gallery. Or maybe you were rushed on to the next thing at the zoo or aquarium. Your companions had places to go. There was a schedule to keep or somewhere you had to be. But there are some things that are too much to take in and cannot be rushed. They demand time, attention and attentiveness. And so they cannot be rushed.

Easter, the resurrection of Jesus, is such a thing. It’s too much to take in. And we can’t afford to miss it. We’ll get back to Leviticus. But we need to pause here for a few more weeks.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Luke 24:1-12](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Easter is not a myth. It does have echoes of myth. There were other stories in the ancient world of a god dying and then rising again. That’s worth knowing. But Easter is not just another of those stories. It is the one time it really happened - resurrection. All the other stories are but echoes, shadows, and rumors of the one true real thing - even the stories that were told before it actually came to pass. Easter, Jesus’ resurrection, is not a myth. It is an historical reality.

There is testimony to these events in and beyond the New Testament. There are things in the flow of history that are inexplicable without it. Take out Easter and you have a hole in the timeline. It’s like skipping a crucial episode in a TV series. You pick it back up and find yourself saying, “Wait. How did that happen?” Everything was moving one way. But then the trajectory shifts into another direction. Looking at the timeline, we have to ask, “How did the church get started? How did the movement survive? How do we explain the courage and moral stances that transformed every culture it touched?” This all happened. What’s the explanation?

The answer is the resurrection of Jesus. These people knew and could not un-know it. Easter is an historical event. Easter is an historical event that presses us to consider some things.

We’re going to consider two this morning. First, two realities. Second, two responses.

I. TWO REALITIES

First, two realities in which we can live. We can discern this in the words of the angels to the women at the tomb ([READ Luke 24:5b-6a](#)). It’s quite a question. But it is not for the sake of seeking out information. It is a question asked for the sake of exploration, to get them thinking.

A) He Is Among the Dead

Which is it? Is Jesus among the dead? Is He here, in this place where they stood?

1. An explanation

What is “here”? It is the tomb, this place in the garden, an opening carved into the rock with a large flat round stone rolled over the opening. Literally, that is what “here” is. But symbolically, “here” is the realm of the dead, where life and all our hopes come to a final and brutal end.

2. The expectation

What were these women expecting? The same thing we would have. They had been there on Friday. They had seen Jesus die. And experience told them that dead men do not live again. No wonder then that they were perplexed by the stone rolled away and the body that was missing.

B) He Is Risen

Jesus is dead. That’s one reality. The other is He is risen. He is not here. He is risen.

1. Totally surprising

This would have been totally surprising - even from a worldview perspective. The Greco-Roman view was that the physical was of lesser value than the spiritual. The ideal then would have been an escape from the body, not a renewal of it. The Jewish view was that resurrection would come at the end of history. But there was no concept of one person raised in the middle of history.

2. Utterly relieving

So this would have been totally surprising. And yet utterly relieving. For it meant that Jesus is who He said He is - the Son of God. He is who He said He is and He has done what He said He would do - ushering in the kingdom of God and making a way for us to be right with God.

These are the two realities. Jesus is either dead or alive. And there is no third option.

Application:

This is the news we most deeply want to be true. It is the reality in which we most want to live. It is the story that resonates with our greatest desires. It is the very happiest of endings. Indeed, this is telling us there is no ending. It tells us that the story - our story - goes on forever.

The objection? “But just wanting it to be true doesn’t make it true!” Quite so. That would be childish and naive. But we still have to ask, “Why do we want it to be true? Why this universal desire and impulse across time and culture?” What might that be telling us? Could it be a signal from the outside, trying to break in through all the static, which we need to hear?

Easter is an historical event that presses us to consider some things - these two realities.

II. TWO RESPONSES

And then the two possible responses. Listen to the words of the women to the apostles.

A) Rejecting the News

Note their response (**READ Luke 24:8-11**). A rejection of the news. What’s going on?

1. The messengers and message

Consider first the messengers. Women, in that culture, were deemed to be unreliable and their testimony inadmissible in a court of law. Then consider their message. This dead man was alive.

2. The audience

So you can see how those two things together don't pave the way for a ready hearing. Then we have the audience. This was the 11 remaining apostles - men chosen by Jesus to follow Jesus, authorized to be His heralds. But that would have meant nothing to them now. For He was dead. This was all just too much to take in. It was too much to believe an idle tale, such nonsense.

B) Accepting the News

That's one response - rejecting the news. The other is accepting it (**READ Luke 24:12**).

1. Willing to consider

Luke wants us to pay attention. Peter was willing to consider the news - surprising and stunning as it was. He was open. So he rose and ran to the tomb. He stooped and looked in. He weighed the testimony he had heard and checked out the evidence for himself. Luke is commending this.

2. Processing the message

Peter was willing to consider the message and he began to process it. Clearly, something had happened. And instead of avoiding it, he marveled at it. Minimally, this meant he was confused and astonished. Likely, it was more. He was wondering. His heart was opening to believing.

These are the two responses. We can reject or accept the news. There is no third option.

Application:

And what happened as a result in Peter's life and in the lives of the rest of the apostles? Over time, as resurrection reality settled in and the Holy Spirit did His work, three things took root. First, they experienced peace with God - their standing and security was settled. Which meant no more striving and wondering where they stood. Second, the presence of God - Jesus was with them and within them through the Spirit. They were not alone. And, third, the purpose from God - they were then to go forth and live out this news that brings this peace and presence. No more wondering or wandering. For they had the Lord's peace, presence, and purpose.

Easter is an historical event that presses us to consider some things and to respond.

CONCLUSION:

It is an historical reality as much as any other. Let me list a few events just in the first decade of the 21st century. 2001 - the terrorist attack on 09/11. 2003 - the invasion of Iraq. 2004 - the formation of Facebook. 2007 - Apple and Steve Jobs launch the first iPhone. 2007 - the global financial crisis hits. 2008 - Barack Obama is elected President of the United States. 2010 - the Arab Spring. No doubt there are others worth mentioning. But here's the point. The resurrection of Jesus is as much an historical reality as any of those events. And even more so. For however significant those events prove to be, whatever assessment historians may give to them, in the end they will all pale into insignificance compared to the resurrection of Jesus.

It was all in accordance to and in fulfillment of ancient prophecy and all history. It was the first fruits of what is to come. That means that, as we look at Jesus' resurrection body, we get an idea of what our own will be like. Beyond even that, we have the deep unshakable assurance

that because He is risen, we know that we too one day will be as well. Easter is the first fruits. It is an historical event taking place in the flow of time pointing towards events at the end of time.

And, as such, the whole of what He has done for us needs to be reflected upon...

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