

Your Easter Calling

Matthew 28:1-10

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Bethany Church

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One day, a high school friend paid me an empty compliment. He said, “Wes, of all the people I’ve ever known, you’re one of them.” Try that on the person next to you. Say “____, of all the people I’ve ever known, you’re one of them!” Although it feels empty, it is not. “You’re one of them” carries a hidden and important truth. It affirms that I know you, and the gift of knowing one another is divinely ordained. We know each other because God appointed it. We know each other because the God of wisdom and love desires that we know one another. Whoever you know is part of God’s agenda for you. It is part of your Easter calling.

On this Easter morning, I want you to consider your Easter calling. Today, many will consider the fact of the resurrection, its historicity. We do not found our lives on wishful thinking, but on what the Apostle Paul wrote reassuringly to the Corinthians:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living... (1 Corinthians 15:3-6, NIV)

We are not engaged in wishful thinking. Our belief in the risen Lord is a response to historical facts and God’s outward reach to us. We can observe that outward reach and our Easter calling in Matthew 28. Turn in your Bible to it (page 758 in the pew Bible).

According to Matthew, it was dawn on Sunday and two Marys headed to Jesus’ tomb (other gospels mention additional women). These women may not have understood all the

obstacles God would remove for them. A Roman sentry guarded the tomb, and a big rock sealed it. The guard and rock could not prevent Jesus from rising from the dead, but it could prevent the women from knowing it. With an earthquake God took care of the sentry and the rock. God opened the tomb for the women to see. He made a way for them to be witnesses.

Now, did these women understand what God was doing? Did they celebrate? Did they give thanks? No. Did they understand that God moved the rock for them so that they could see that Jesus rose? No. Did they understand what they saw? No. God sent a couple angels to help them out. Let's listen in:

Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you. (Matthew 28:5-7, NLT)

The first words out of the angels' mouth were... "Don't be afraid!" The angels went on to explain the frightening circumstance... because all these women could think of was another indignity, the robbery of a tomb. In fact, the Apostle John reveals that Mary Magdalene later mistook Jesus for a gardener and accused him of stealing Jesus' body. These women had trouble recognizing the work of God in their painful circumstance, so they were afraid. Even after they heard the angels' message and left in obedience, they were afraid. In Matthew 28:9-10 they encounter Jesus. What are the first words out of Jesus' mouth? Don't be afraid!

Your Easter calling is first: "Don't be afraid." Your circumstance may be difficult, even hopeless; how much more hopeless can you get than being dead? How much more disillusioned can you be than having your trust publicly mocked and destroyed? These women were afraid. We become afraid. We fear our health and death. We fear our rejection. We fear our failure. We fear our loss of money, friends, possessions, relationships, trust and hope. However, the call

of Easter is “don’t be afraid.” In those barren circumstances, God is moving in his power and in his love.

The second instructions of the angels were “come and see.” They were told to move from where they were standing so they could see. They needed to reexamine the circumstances. Other gospels report that Jesus’ burial cloth and head napkin remained in the burial cave. Most grave robbers weren’t going to leave that. By looking again at their circumstance, these women found reason for hope. As they continued to move in faith, they met the risen Christ. Now they weren’t just seeing the signs of God’s redeeming work, they encountered God. They again tasted God’s love.

The second aspect of your Easter calling is “come, see.” You and I need to move around with people of faith and see again the world we live in. If you hang with skeptics, you’ll be skeptical. If you hang with people who witness miracles, you’ll witness miracles. If you hang with people who are comfortably religious, but not passionately converted, you’ll shy away from God’s converting work and see Christ and his demands of faith comfortably in the distance.

This past Thursday, I revisited Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch to eat and see their newly open Miracle Lodge. As I heard camp director Bob Bardwell share bits and pieces of its construction, how checks for \$20,000 and \$5,000 were unexpectedly handed to him, how \$300,000 worth of plywood was donated and delivered at just the critical time, the words “come, see” strengthened me.

A week ago or so, I spoke to a group of youth. I asked the question, “What is the gospel and why do you believe it?” I know the question made my young companions uncomfortable. I really didn’t want them uncomfortable. I like people to be comfortable; however, I knew that eventually each young person would be challenged. I remember how I was challenged to rethink

what I believe and defend it. I was not challenged by a pastor. I was challenged by classmates, professors, friends and a host of celebrities. Each youth struggled, you might imagine. They concluded that they believed because they were raised to believe; but they lacked evidence that could help others join them in their belief. Your Easter calling is to go beyond the traditions of your childrearing, to come, see.

Both the angels and Jesus gave these instructions to the women: go and tell. You see the God who removed the soldiers and boulder from the tomb entrance so the women could see, also sent these women to go and tell so that others could also see. The promise is that risen Christ would also meet the others as they acted in faith. Other gospels show us that those disciples had difficulty believing the message, but that wasn't the women's mission. They simply were to go and tell what they had "come to see."

What is happening in your mind and heart this Easter morning? Do you realize that the one, who opened the tomb so those women could see, sent me to you so that as you respond in faith you will also see? Do you realize that the risen Christ is present and working in your current circumstances regardless of how painful, disappointing or God-forsaken you believe them to be? I've been sent to you, and God is commissioning you to go and tell also.

Do you hear his words "Don't be afraid?" You need not fear anything! Have you ever played the game *Rock, Paper, Scissors*? Well, Easter power trumps everything you face. So it may look like disaster, but come and see the work of the risen Christ in your midst. A messenger may request that you move a little bit to see, perhaps into a group like ALPHA, a retreat like Walk to Emmaus, a service ministry like In His Name or Habitat for Humanity, a special meeting with an evangelist or ministry by a prayer team. Whatever the case, you are to go and share what you've come to see. This is your Easter calling.