

Easter

AT NEWBREAK

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APPEARANCES OF JESUS AFTER EASTER

DAY 1 - REINSTATEMENT OF PETER

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 21:15-17

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

OBSERVATION

After eating together for the first time since the resurrection, Jesus addresses Peter which would have made an already high anxiety moment even worse. Peter had denied and abandoned Jesus at a critical time in His life and this was probably the first time they had spoken since his denial. Jesus begins to ask Peter how much he loves Him, and Peter gets upset because he repeats the questions three times. Though Jesus had already given him his name of Peter, in this conversation he refers to Him as Simon son of John. This may have been done to refer to the denial and that Peter had regressed spiritually. In the end Jesus completely restores Peter and reminds him that his singular purpose in life is to feed Jesus' sheep and grow the church.

APPLICATION

We all have moments where our thoughts or behavior deny Jesus. The pressure to always fit in and avoid uncomfortable situations can drive us to do and say things we don't mean and ultimately will regret. Have you ever done or said something to hide or disguise the fact that you are a Christ-Follower? Why did you do it and how did you feel afterwards? Just like Jesus asked Peter if he “loved him more than these (referring to other people, jobs, social status, etc),” are there things in your life that compete for your complete affection to Jesus?

PRAYER

Father, thank You that You are in the business of restoring broken relationships. Forgive me for the times where I deny You. Teach me that there is nothing in this world that deserves the undivided affection of my heart like You do. And Lord, help to know that by loving Your children and building Your church I am showing how much I love You!

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DAY 2 - JESUS ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 24:13-16

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

OBSERVATION

That very same day, two of the disciples left Jerusalem and undoubtedly they were filled with extreme sorrow and confusion. Though Jesus had predicted His death several times, they didn't fully grasp or even comprehend what He was saying and having heard about the empty tomb, they simply didn't know what to think or how to feel. Jesus asked them to tell Him the story of Jesus but like so many others they hadn't grasped the whole picture. Everyone was understandably hung up on the fact that Jesus died. How can a King possibly rule when he has been killed? Jesus rebuked them sharply, pointing out that all of the Old Testament pointed to the very moment that had just occurred (25-27). It is only once they share a meal together and break bread that the disciples' eyes are opened to the fact that Jesus has been with them the whole time (30-31).

APPLICATION

Just like Jesus pressed the travelers for the complete story, He is far more interested in us not just knowing facts about Him, but He wants us to know Him personally as our Lord and Savior. Do you have an Emmaus' Road story? Whether it be your salvation experience or a season where doubts kept you from seeing God clearly? A key to always recognizing Jesus is keeping His sacrifice ever-present in our minds. It was when he broke the bread that they recognized who he was (35) and that action symbolized Jesus being broken on the cross for our sins. What habits can you put into your life that would help you keep your focus on Jesus and His sacrifice?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to always know when You are near and never be blind to Your presence. Jesus, make my heart burn when I read Your word and spend time with You. Lord, as I read and share Your story, help me to always make knowing You more important than just knowing about You.

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DAY 3 - JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:15-16

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

OBSERVATION

Mary Magdalene came early to visit Jesus’ burial place but discovered the rock had been removed and upon further inspection, that the tomb was empty except for the burial cloths. Peter and John both also came but after discovering the body was gone, went back home. Mary stayed at the tomb and while weeping looked one last time into the tomb where two angels now sat. They then asked her an incredulous question, “Why are you crying?”, as if they somehow didn’t know the Son of God had been murdered on a cross. The death of Jesus is the greatest injustice this world has ever seen and simultaneously also the greatest expression of love this world has ever seen. It is this tension we as Christ-Followers live in: without Jesus’ execution there is no reason for celebration. Jesus then appears to Mary and instructs her to go share with the disciples that Jesus was no longer in the tomb but had been raised from the dead.

APPLICATION

It is particularly beautiful that though Jesus’ closest disciples had seen the empty tomb, he chose to only reveal Himself to Mary Magdalene. The same is true for our own lives. Though we aren’t necessarily important or special in the eyes of the world, Jesus calls us by name to let us know He has risen from the dead. Has there been a time in your life where your sorrow was turned to joy by the presence of Jesus? Knowing that Jesus calls us by name should bring us such unspeakable joy that our heart and lips cry out “I have seen the Lord!” What are you going through right now that you need your grief turn to joy? How can you start right now to give Jesus your pain in exchange for His joy?

PRAYER

Thank You Jesus that You reveal yourself to ordinary people. Help me everyday to sit at Your feet and hear You call me by name. Help me to choose joy and when the joy comes, may my lips be able to say “I have seen the Lord!” Teach me to exchange my grief for joy knowing that You were raised from the dead.

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DAY 4 - JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:19-21

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

OBSERVATION

After revealing Himself to Mary, Jesus appears to the disciples who had hidden themselves in a room for "fear of the Jews." The phrase "Peace be with you" and "fear not" is found throughout the Bible and is usually the first thing an angel says when it appears before humans. Having an experience with a divine being would be a very unsettling experience, and for the disciples, seeing Jesus, whom they thought to be dead, would be quite terrifying. The disciples thought they had much to fear between further retribution from the Jews and that their Messiah had been murdered. Yet all these fears are immediately erased when Jesus appears and speaks peace over their lives and situation.

APPLICATION

Jesus' love for us is relentless. Locked doors will not keep Jesus from coming into our lives and erasing our fears by speaking truth. We all carry fear and confusion that keep us from hearing and seeing God clearly. Have you ever been through a time where your circumstances kept you from hearing or seeing God? How did you make it through that time? What is going on in your life right now that you feel is insurmountable? Are you willing to commit this to God even in the midst of your doubts? What habit can you put in your life to bring your situation to God every single day?

PRAYER

Jesus, I ask for the peace that only You can bring to fill my life right now. There are circumstances and situations that I simply cannot handle, so right now I give them to you. When I am overwhelmed by the pressures of this world, help me by overwhelming me with Your presence.

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DAY 5 - JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:24-29

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

OBSERVATION

Thomas is a very complex individual. He was one of the original twelve disciples called yet he still managed to hold onto significant doubts. The fact that he wasn't with disciples (who were at least hiding together) reveals he had distanced himself from his past life after the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet the same message Mary brought to the disciples is what they brought to Thomas, “we have seen the Lord!” Thomas persisted in his doubt saying that without physical proof he would never believe. It would be over a week before Jesus would reveal Himself to Thomas. Knowing that Jesus gave Thomas the proof he requested should serve as a comfort and a warning. Yes, Jesus will insert Himself into our situations to “prove” Himself but Jesus rebuked Thomas for lacking belief without physical evidence.

APPLICATION

Is it hard for you to trust? We would like to think that with enough “evidence” we would have an unshakable faith but if Thomas, who was with Jesus for all the miracles, still had room for doubt, so can we. Faith is the “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), so even though there is evidence and proof of God and the divine, our primary method of approaching God is faith. What situations drive you most quickly toward doubt? Looking back at your life, have you even been through a time where your doubt led you away from God? They say faith is like a muscle and we must use it in order for it to grow stronger. Would you be willing to commit to the next week, month, or year to ask God to grow your faith? What specific areas of your life do you need to exercise more faith?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the example of Thomas who, though he clung to doubt, You still pressed into Him and revealed yourself. Father, I pray that I would confess “My Lord and my God” into every moment of my life regardless of my circumstances. Help me to believe and trust you even when I can not see.