

Resurrection Now!

John 20:10-18

2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2

Philippians 3:10-11 has Paul speaking out his hearts desire: "that I might know Him, know the power of His Resurrection, know the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the Dead".

Can we say that we know Jesus as intimately, as closely as Mary, or as Paul? Is Resurrection pie in the sky when we die or steak on the plate while we wait? Its both! But in this message I want to emphasize Resurrection Now and bring together the story of Mary's encounter with the Risen Christ with Paul's reflection upon it, and affirmation about it. Paul speaks about knowing: the Greek word includes seeing, believing and understanding.

There is a contrast on this first Easter Day and its between the disciples and Mary. 20:9 tells us that the Disciples (Peter & John in this case) still do not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead & then in 20:10 it tells us that they went back to their homes, simply with the knowledge of the empty tomb. But Mary we are told stayed crying at the tomb (v11/13). Jesus had told the disciples in Luke 23:28 to weep for yourselves, and weep for your children. Amidst her tears Mary saw angels (v12), something that Peter & John appeared to have missed. Matthew 28:2 records that an Angel rolled away the stone and sat upon it as if you say: what are you going to do about it? The guards unsurprisingly are described as being like dead men! Mary then makes the key statement of faith: They have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have put Him (13b).

In terms of Paul's reflection in 2 Corinthians 5:14: Christ's love compelled Mary (to stay, to cry, to see). She was convinced, by faith, that one died for all and therefore all died. She no longer

wanted to live for herself but for Him. In 5:16 Paul speaks of us no longer seeing things from a worldly point of view. Mary's initial response is: where have you put him? She saw Jesus but she didn't see Him! She was crying but she was also seeking. She asked the Gardener: where have you put Him? Almost suggesting: I'll get Him, He will be safe with me. Faith often falters as we experience grief! But maybe the resurrection body of Jesus was different?

For Mary this encounter, as with all with the Risen Christ, was utterly Life Changing: She understood that she could not 'hold onto Him, then she understood that He had given her Good news/ Gospel to share: I have seen the Lord (20:8). She and countless generations that flow from her encounter had been given in Paul's words:

1. A Ministry of reconciling the unreconcilable (peace-making)
2 Corinthians 5:18/19: "He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation."
2. A ministry of Ambassadorial Importance (imploring) 5:20
"We are Christ's ambassadors".
3. A Ministry of Urgent, Direct, Grace Proclaiming (Gospeling)
6:1/2 "Now is the Day of salvation."

For Mary and as Paul affirms Resurrection Now was for all, and our lack of grasping that has led to the lack of power and grace, which builds Churches today. Resurrection Now for Canterbury through all Disciples and through the Body of Christ.

Through all Disciples

Compelled 2 Corinthians 5:14 by His Grace: For Christ's Love compels us.

Convinced 2 Corinthians 5:14 by the Message of the Cross: I am convinced.

Created 2 Corinthians 5:17 newly by its completed work.

So 'worldly points of view' don't get a look in: we choose to walk by Faith!

As Mary discovered: **He knows Me By My Name!!** (20:16) Every hair on my head is numbered (Matthew 10:30) & my Name is written in the Lambs Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). **He's got a work for me to do!** (20:17) Don't Hold onto me! Instead Go!! **You have a testimony to share** (20:18)

Through the Body of Christ

1. **Life Style and Death Style:** How we live as we follow Christ is a critical credibility issue for those looking in, but how we die is just as important. For me to live is Christ, to die is gain / Death is swallowed up in Victory / I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in Me. Confidently facing death and looking forward to spending eternity with Jesus are gigantic faith statements and real testimony to the Risen Christ.
2. **Don't Hold On To Jesus (20:17):** Again we must not act as if He is ours alone, boxed and at our beck and call. The Body of Christ must always be to an extent: provisional and the evidence that we are keeping up with our Jesus who goes ahead of us is when lives are transformed, people are healed, demons are sent packing, and the dead raised. On that basis can we really say of Canterbury and its congregations: we are the Body of Christ?
3. **Give God a chance to do His stuff (John 14:12):** We must recapture the naturalness of the supernatural ministry of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. We are not a worldly organisation following a dead hero: we are a work of God from start to finish (individually and corporately) fashioned to continue Jesus's ministry in this day and generation, until He returns.

4. So we must pray and believe for the conversion of Canterbury: That same winsome Jesus is drawing people to himself in 2013. The more that we become who we are: the Body of Christ, the more we will embrace all who come seeking Him into our ever growing family of believers. We need to conceive such a harvest at the Throne of Grace and work with all the time and strength the Lord gives us to see it realised.

Paul summarises the effect of the Resurrection in 2 Corinthians 5:17: the song celebrates I am a New Creation, No More in Condemnation, He in the Grace of God I Stand! Paul affirms: the Old (Nature) has gone, the New (Nature) has come. Mary didn't recognise Jesus, maybe we too should be harder to recognise if we are truly following Christ and living out the Resurrection Now! Promises abound: 'He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His Glorious Body' (Philippians 3:21) & 'it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body' (1 Corinthians 15:44). Remember becoming a Christian is a work of God & Grace from start to finish: not a new start to Life but a new Life to start. Paul's description: we are New Creations: now there's Resurrection!!

As a people of the Cross living in the power of the Resurrection we become related in an entirely new way: a relationship entirely of equals: part of God's Family. That's why later on resurrection Day Thomas eventually feels able by faith to affirm in response to Jesus (who said He was going to My Father & Your Father), My Lord & My God.

Paul concludes by affirming: 2 Corinthians 5:18: All this is from God: its His Work, its supernatural, and its by Faith.

Impossibilities we laugh at them. Mountains we stand tall in Christ and look down upon them. Suffering we embrace with grace and see it woven into His glorious plan. Weakness, Foolishness, hopelessness are His raw materials. The Potters Wheel His place

of creation. And even if all seems to be heading in the wrong direction our 'But if not' Faith says we will choose to trust Him for all eternity. That's Resurrection Now and its as powerful on the streets of Nakuru, Kenya as in the penthouses of Westminster, as potent when delivered through Street Pastors as Kidz Klub workers, as transformative as when we hold a Banquet for all as when we drop some tins into the Food Bank. Now that's worth a few tears, mistaken identity, supposed failure and undervaluing from the World. That's worth letting go of our grip on Jesus and following Him, letting go of our grip on the Church, and getting by His Spirit the true Body of Christ.

Pastor David

March 31st 2013.