

Day Thirty-One

Jesus: Real, Relevant, Raw and Radical!

When Angels Grin

Matthew 28:1-20(NLT) Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. **2 Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. 3 His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. 5 Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. 7 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.” 8 The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel’s message. 9 And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”**

Mark 16:4-7(NLT) But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. **5 When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, 6 but the angel said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. 7 Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.”**

Mark 16:8-11(NLT) The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. **9 After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. 11 But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn’t believe her.**

As the women walk to the tomb, they don’t have thoughts about Jesus being raised from the dead. They are thinking about a particular stone; the stone in front of the tomb. We know this from their conversation with one another. While they worry, Heaven has already dealt with the problem. Once they arrived at the tomb the stone was already moved. The stone was not moved for Jesus’ sake, the stone was moved

for the women's sake. Jesus did not need the stone to be moved so that He could get out. The women needed the stone to be moved so that they could get in. Just like the cross, the tomb is visited with an earthquake, guards being affected and stones being moved.

The women are met by an angel (probably not from Anaheim). What is the angel doing? He is sitting on the stone that was rolled in front of the tomb. As he is sitting, the guards are fainting with fear. Can you picture it? I see this angel, with a big smile, more likely a big grin. Brimming and grinning! Mark writes and tells us that the women saw an angel appearing as a young man. Then he speaks to them; ***"Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. 7 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."***

As always, when heaven invades earth, the first words are, "Don't be afraid." Fear, for us humans, is a natural response to that which we don't understand. Listen to the kinds of words surrounding the resurrection: Fear, shock, alarmed, confusion, trembling, bewilderment, unbelief, doubt and panic. All of these from an earthly perspective. What about from heavens perspective? The angel says, (I am paraphrasing) *"I know you are looking for Jesus, but He is not here."* Smiling he says, *"Girls, don't you remember" He told you this would happen. Just in case you struggle with what I just told you, come check out where His body was lying. Now ladies, pay attention; you've got to hurry. Get back and tell the disciples what happened to Jesus and remember the party is going to be in Galilee. By the way, tell Peter his invitation was not rescinded. Make sure he knows that his name is still on the guest list. Girls, girls pay attention, remember what I told you."*

Around church circles I have heard this saying many times: "Don't be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good." I understand the sentiment behind it, but I do not think that is our real problem. Our problem is the same as the disciples and the women that went to the tomb. We are so earthly minded that we miss heaven all together. Jesus told us to pray: ***Matthew 6:10(NIV) "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*** What do you think the kingdom is like? Here's a hint: it does not make you miserable. The disciples were told over and over again by Jesus what was going to take place. Jesus did not leave any of the details out; from suffering to resurrection. We know He told them where He was going to meet them after the resurrection. But where are they? They are not where Jesus told them to be; they are in Jerusalem in grief and in sorrow. They are hiding instead of celebrating. They are confused instead of being resolute. They are filled with doubt instead of faith. They are mourning instead of rejoicing.

We have this concept in our minds about God, about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit. We see God as solemn and serious. We picture a God of anger, burning with indignation; a God who is more interested in judging than loving, a God who would rather condemn than save, a God who would rather frown than smile. We think Christ followers should be pious and dignified; that we should only be occasionally joyful, as is appropriate for spiritual people. Some think to be happy is to hinder our holiness. I mean, after all, the sacred does not pitch its tent in an atmosphere of frivolity. The sacred is about duty and rigor. The sacred is serious business. God cannot possibly be bothered by the foolishness of laughter or joy, can He? Jesus told Philip: **John 14:8-10(NIV)** *"Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' 9 Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.'"*

If you want to know what the Father is like, look at Jesus. How do you see Jesus? Have you noticed that Jesus could not keep the crowds away? Everywhere He went, people followed Him; they wanted to be around Him. Compare that to the Pharisees; the only time they were able to get crowds were during special festival days. The people did not come because of them, the people came despite them. The people came because of Jesus. Kids loved Him so much that they just wanted Him to put His hands on them. He used kids as examples of how His kingdom operates. That was unheard of! When His disciples try to stop the kids from coming, Jesus rebuked His disciples, not the kids. If you think Jesus was sour, you are thinking of the wrong Jesus. Listen to His birth announcement. **Luke 2:10-11(NLT)** *"But the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!'"*

Jesus is the good news that brings great joy to everybody! When Jesus is baptized, the Father says, "He (Jesus) brings Him (the Father) great joy..." We are to leap for joy when we are persecuted. Jesus gave the disciples His joy; Jesus' joy is full. "Rejoice," "be joyful, I bring you news of great joy." These are the words of the Father's kingdom. Righteousness, peace and joy, those are kingdom qualities. "I will dry every tear. There will be no more crying. In the presence of the Lord is fullness of joy." Jesus is Joy. Joy is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Don't miss the joy of the resurrection. Don't miss the fact that the angel sits on the stone. God, in His wisdom to confound the wise, has the women discover the empty tomb. They become the first witnesses to the resurrection. Women could not even testify in court except for special exception; the same way we would treat a minor today. Yet, God chose them to be the first to proclaim that He is alive. The angels are smiling.

What is going on here? This kingdom that we are praying to come is not going to make you miserable. In this kingdom, misery goes to die. Tears will be permanently dried. Sorrow will be forever banished. Death is swallowed up in victory. That is why Joseph got his tomb back because Jesus just borrowed it for a few nights. Jesus, in His life and ministry, borrowed a lot of things: He borrowed a womb at His birth. He borrowed a stable in His infancy. He borrowed an earthly father in Joseph. He borrowed a boat in one of His sermons. He borrowed a little boy's lunch in feeding a multitude. He borrowed a young donkey to ride into Jerusalem. He borrowed a room to have the Last Supper in. He borrowed a tomb at His death. What happens when Jesus borrows something? It forever changes. Mary is highly honored. Joseph is respected. The fishing boat captain decided to join Jesus on His mission. The little boy went home with food for a nation. The little donkey had bragging rights about being used by the Messiah. We celebrate the Lord's table in remembering the Last supper. **And because Jesus borrowed a tomb, the grave becomes a door to glorious joy.**

The problem in our world today is not that we have too much joy, it is that we have don't have enough joy. We, just like the women who went to the tomb, are thinking about stones instead of remembering His words. Whatever problems you might be dealing with today, simply remember: heaven already has the answer. If you want to see your Father smile, tell Him about your plans. If you want to see Jesus laugh, tell Him about your impossibilities. I guarantee you this: in the background, the angels will be grinning...when you get to heaven, look for the young angel with the biggest grin and ask him about sitting on stones.

Prayer:

- **Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you to overflow with His joy.**
- **Thank the Lord Jesus that He revealed the Father to us.**
- **Pray that His kingdom will come in you and through you.**
- **Whatever impossibility you are facing, release the worry of it into your Father's hands.**
- **Share the joy of God's kingdom with someone who desperately needs it. Ask the Lord who.**