

Explore the Bible: April 17

Risen • Matthew 28:1-10;16-20

By Cyndi Grace



Grace

I truly hope the excitement of Easter hasn't worn thin in your life. So many times, annual church celebrations become rote and we enter them with a less than enthusiastic attitude. However, the greatest thing that has ever happened in the history of the world should not be taken as a ritualistic, routine date on our church calendar.

It should not be reduced to new clothing or performances by choirs. We should have the same awe and excitement we find in the women who came upon the angel at the tomb of Jesus over 2,000 years ago.

I was stilled by the words of the angel: *I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here* (Matthew 28:5 CSB). In the Gospel of Luke, the angel is recorded as saying, *Why do you seek the living among the dead* (Luke 27: 5 NKJ)?

I wonder if we too look for Jesus in places He is not! Stay with me. We know He rose from the dead and is alive, but do we live like we truly believe it? I wonder if our lack of trust and joy in the power of Jesus comes about because we've been seeking the living among the dead – seeking things ABOUT Him but not seeking them IN Him.

When life becomes hard, we read self-help books ABOUT Him to bring comfort. We seek Him in church programs or a pastor or other church staff member. Now, don't get me wrong; these are not necessarily bad but they lack the power of the life that Jesus Himself brings.

Often, we have a junior high-level relationship with Jesus. You remember those junior high days. You liked someone, but didn't dare tell them yourself. You asked a friend to communicate with them. There wasn't a face-to-face relationship, and the crush usually lasted until sixth period.

In the same way, we so often we talk ABOUT Jesus but not TO Him. Our relationship is second-hand and fleeting, like those junior high romances.

These women, however, left the tomb with excitement and couldn't wait to tell others. They were changed. Jesus was alive and they had hope and a new purpose. His resurrection meant that things were going to be OK.

Do we live with the same expectancy? I know things are hard in our world today. The war in Ukraine is a travesty. The progressive agenda is a slap to Bible-believing Christians and it's hard to stand firm. Families are falling apart because of drug addictions. When life is hard, we need to travel back to THAT day.

The Romans, a cruel and heartless lot, were in charge. They were pagan and had no respect for any religion or deity except their own. I think we sanitize the way things were back then to make it less disturbing, but life was extremely hard for the women who traveled to the grave that morning. The hope they thought they had found in this Jesus was dead. The emotional state of these women was palatable. All was lost. That is, until the angel spoke.

As the women left the tomb they met the risen Jesus, It was no longer the angel's words about Jesus; it was meeting Jesus

face to face. What did they do? They fell at His feet and worshiped Him. The encounter became real and personal. Their lives were forever changed. They rushed to tell others the good news because they couldn't hold it in! This was the greatest thing that had ever happened to them.

Be honest. Is Jesus' crucifixion and return from the dead for your sins the greatest thing that has ever happened to you? I fear many of us who have grown up in church settle for seeking things other than Jesus for our hope. Anything other than Jesus brings only temporary comfort. It's akin to searching for the living among the dead.

Believer, once we are saved God's desire is to develop a deep, intimate relationship with us. A relationship that causes us to fall at His feet whenever we encounter His Spirit. A relationship that makes us weep because of the joy He brings. A relationship that encourages us to trust Him with every part of our lives and emboldens us to tell others because it is true life.

Does that describe your life? This Easter Sunday, intentionally turn your eyes to the living Jesus and who He wants to be in your life. "Then the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace" (Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. Music and lyrics by Helen Howarth Lemmel, 1863-1961).

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