

Devotions for the Week of April 1, 2018
Easter Sunday
North East United Methodist Church
By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, April 1, 2018

Read John 19 – John 20:1-18.

The moment of death...the moment of crucifixion...the moment of suffering...the moment of burial...now the moment of triumph, victory, death is conquered...resurrection. Easter morning.

Lee Strobel, in his book, A Case for Christ, quotes Gary Habermas, professor at Liberty University, who states, “*The resurrection was undoubtedly the central proclamation of the early church from the very beginning. The earliest Christians didn’t just endorse Jesus’ teachings; they were convinced they had seen him alive after his crucifixion. That’s what changed their lives and started the church. Certainly, since this was their centermost conviction, they would have made absolutely sure that it was true.*”

The resurrection changed the world. Not only did Jesus appearing to His disciples, give them the strength and focus to go out and risk and give their lives for their faith, beginning the early church, which is still impacting the world two thousand years later; but, the resurrection holds power for us today.

Professor Habermas tells Lee Strobel the story of his wife, dying of stomach cancer in 1995. He tells Strobel, “*I knew if God were to come to me, I’d ask only one question: ‘Lord, why is Debbie up there [dying] in that bed?’*”

And I think God would respond by asking gently, ‘Gary, did I raise my Son from the dead?’

I'd say, 'Come on, Lord, I've written seven books on that topic! Of course, he was raised from the dead. But I want to know about Debbie!'

I think he'd keep coming back to the same question – 'Did I raise my Son from the dead?' 'Did I raise my Son from the dead?' until I got his point: the resurrection says that if Jesus was raised two thousand years ago, there's an answer to Debbie's death in 1995.

It was a horribly emotional time for me, but I couldn't get around the fact that the resurrection IS the answer for her suffering. I still worried; I still wondered what I'd do raising four kids alone. But there wasn't a time when that truth didn't comfort me.

Losing my wife was the most painful experience I've ever had to face, but if the resurrection could get me through that, it can get me through anything. It was good for AD 30, it was good for 1995, and it's good beyond that."

Strobel ends by writing, "Habermas locked eyes with mine. 'That's not some sermon,' he said quietly. 'I believe that with all my heart. If there's a resurrection, there's a heaven. If Jesus was raised, Debbie will be raised. And I will be someday too. Then I'll see them both.'"

Easter morning. Resurrection. Believe. Give thanks!
Celebrate!

Monday, April 2, 2018

Read John 20:19-30.

Jesus appears to the disciples and they were filled with joy. Jesus spoke to them and said, "*Peace be with you...*" Thomas, at first, didn't believe...but then saw Jesus...saw the wounds... and His eyes were opened to the truth.

Do you see? Do you believe? Have you had your eyes opened to the truth? Have you seen Jesus, my Lord?

There is a wonderful song that we sometimes sing on Emmaus weekends called “*Have you seen Jesus, my Lord?*”

Have you seen Jesus, my Lord? He’s here in plain view. Take a look, open your eyes...He’ll show it to you.

Have you ever looked at the sunset...With the sky mellowin’ red...And the clouds suspended like feathers? Then I say, you’ve seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever stood at the ocean...With the white foam at your feet, Felt the endless thunderin’ motion? Then I say, you’ve seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever looked at the cross, With a man hangin’ in pain, And the look of love in his eyes? Then I say, you’ve seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever stood in the Family, with the Lord there in your midst, Seen the face of Christ on your neighbor? Then I say, you’ve seen Jesus my Lord.

Where have you seen Jesus? When have you experienced Him? Who have you met in your life who showed you Jesus? When has Jesus tried to show Himself to you and you refused to see? Think back. Remember. Believe. Open your eyes.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

Read John 21.

Max Lucado, in his book, He Still Moves Stones, writes of this moment...this moment when Peter sees Jesus again, after betraying Him...after running...after turning coward.

He writes, *“Peter turns and looks. Jesus has come. Not just Jesus the teacher, but Jesus the death-defeater, Jesus the king...Jesus the victor over darkness. Jesus the God of heaven and earth is on the shore...and he’s building a fire.*

Peter plunges into the water, swims to the shore, and stumbles out wet and shivering and stands in front of the friend he betrayed. Jesus has prepared a bed of coals. Both are aware of the last time Peter had stood near a fire. Peter had failed God, but God had come to him.

For one of the few times in his life, Peter is silent. What words would suffice? The moment is too holy for words. God is offering breakfast to the friend who betrayed him. And Peter is once again finding grace at Galilee.

What do you say at a moment like this? What do you say at a moment such as this?

It’s just you and God. You and God both know what you did. And neither one of you is proud of it. What do you do?

You might consider doing what Peter did. Stand in God’s presence. Stand in his sight. Stand still and wait. Sometimes that’s all a soul can do. Too repentant to speak, but too hopeful to leave – we just stand.

Stand amazed...He has come back...

He invites you to try again. This time, with him.”

Whatever you’ve done...wherever you’ve gone...however you’ve fallen...God invites you to try again...this time...with Him...

Simply stand in His presence...Invite Him into your life...confess your mistakes...let Him fill you...Believe. This is the Easter message we are called to proclaim to the world. New Life!

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

Read Luke 24.

Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection and it is here that Jesus explains the scriptures to the disciples. Suddenly their eyes are opened to what the scriptures are saying and how the Messiah had to suffer and die, and would be raised on the third day.

One of the most compelling arguments for Jesus being the Messiah, being who He claimed to be...the Son of God...is the fulfillment of prophecy in His life.

According to Professor Louis Lapidès, Jewish convert to Christianity, when asked if Jesus merely fulfilled many of the Old Testament prophecies by accident, *“Not a chance...The odds are so astronomical that they rule that out. Someone did the math and figured out that the probability of just eight prophecies being fulfilled is one chance in one hundred million billion. That number is millions of times greater than the total number of people who’ve ever walked the planet! He calculated that if you took this number of silver dollars, they would cover the state of Texas to a depth of two feet. If you marked one silver dollar among them and then had a blindfolded person wander the whole state and bend down to pick up one coin, what would be the odds he’s choose the one that had been marked? The same odds that anybody in history could have fulfilled just eight of the prophecies.”*

Yet Jesus fulfilled forty-eight of the Old Testament prophecies.

Open your eyes to the truth. God is not trying to hide it. Begin with the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53: 3-9, 12), words concerning Jesus written hundreds of years before His birth.

Allow God to open your eyes. Get into the Word. Get your friends into the Word. Believe.

Thursday, April 5, 2018

Read Matthew 28.

“He is risen from the dead and is going ahead of you...”

Amen. Whatever problems you will face in the future...Jesus is going ahead of you to prepare the way.

Just take some time to sit with the risen Jesus. Just talk to Him. Ask Him to help you have the strength to fulfill the Great Commission He gives to you, to all of us, in Matthew 28: 18-20. Try sitting in silence before Him for fifteen minutes, just listening, just being with Him.

He is risen & He is alive. Pray and listen with that knowledge, that He is sitting across from you. Believe.

Friday, April 6, 2018

Read John 21:15-19.

Jesus says to Peter and to us, *“feed my sheep.”*

We must be about caring for others, reaching out beyond ourselves.

How do we show our love for Jesus? We *“feed [His] sheep.”* We care for men, women and children. We remember that all His children...all His children were in His mind when He went to the cross, bore the nails, died a horrific death. There is not a person you will ever look eyes with that Jesus did not have on His mind that day...whom Jesus does not love.

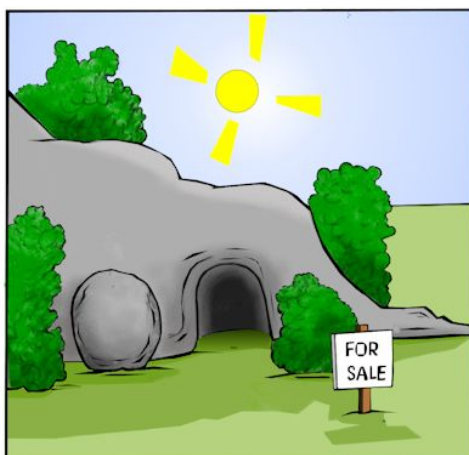
Pray about how God can use you to touch others in our church, on our charge, in our community. Let us *“feed [His] sheep”* this week, this month, this year. May our lives, our love, light the path for many more to discover Christ’s love.

Saturday, April 7, 2018

**Read I Peter 1:3; John 11:25-26; Rom. 8:11; Rom. 8:34;
Rom. 10:9; Isaiah 53:5; Job 19:25; Luke 24:46-47;
Rom. 4:25.**

Celebrate. We are an Easter people...a Resurrection people! Read through and reflect on these many scriptures centered on the Resurrection. Believe. Remember. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!

Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow.



FOR SALE - Single owner tomb. Only used three days, and still has that new tomb smell. Reason for sale.. resident was resurrected.