*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

April 10 - 15

“The Life of Jesus: Resurrection”

**Monday, April 10 Matthew 28:1-10**

*“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week . . .”*

 Early on that morning following the Sabbath the most amazing news began to permeate the world. Jesus is risen! All of the Gospel writers agree on the time and on the wonder with which the followers of Jesus are confronted with the evidence of the Resurrection. “After the Sabbath,” when it was permissible to be involved in work, very early in the morning as dawn was breaking, the women came to the tomb. They were especially anxious to perform the proper burial rites for the body of Jesus which they had not been able to do on the evening of the crucifixion.

 It has been said that the stone was not removed to let Jesus out but to let the women in. They had observed the burial of Christ and had probably participated in removing the body from the cross. Now, having told them not to be afraid, the angel proclaims that the empty tomb is a sign of Jesus’ resurrection, and they are now to go and tell his disciples the good news. On the way Jesus meets them and speaks with them. They know him! They know his voice as the One who has always called to them, and they worship him.

*I know you as the resurrected One, Lord, and I worship you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 11 Mark 16:1-11**

*“They did not believe it”*

 Mark writes for those who never will experience Jesus’ physical presence. He writes for those who may feel like the disciples, struggling against the wind in a small boat during the dark hours of the night and feeling acute fear because Jesus is not physically there to be touched or to give an audible word of assurance. The risen Jesus does not appear bodily in our midst. Angels do not descend to give reassuring reports. We have to believe in Jesus’ resurrection based on the word of others. How will we know for sure that what they say is true? Will we be willing to stake our lives on that truth? Was it real? Is it real for us, today?

 When by faith we believe in Jesus’ resurrection, we enter the story. We are the next chapter. What would we have done if we were those first women let in on the tremendous news? What will we do now? Will we flee in fear and become silent? Will the story die with us? Or will we obediently follow Jesus to Galilee, continue to learn from him and grow to become more and more like him, and go out into all the world to tell the story?

*By faith I believe you live, Lord, and this I will share with others. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 12 Luke 24:1-12**

*“Their words seemed to them like nonsense”*

 The cross was not the end of Jesus’ story, for it is followed by the resurrection that signifies a new beginning. The empty tomb and Jesus’ resurrection fulfills some of his promises made in Galilee, but that realization hits the disciples with surprise and shock. In fact, the early moments of discovery show that they have to overcome a strong sense of doubt about the events. Their reaction makes them look as “modern,” “skeptical,” and “sophisticated” as any contemporary person who inquires, “But what does the science say?”

 It takes repeated appearances to convince the disciples that Jesus has been raised. They are just as unprepared for this event as we would have been. We should therefore exercise patience as we share this hope with others. Imagine what Jesus must have felt like when he shared the hope of resurrection during his ministry and all he received was strange looks. The slowness of the disciples to believe is not exemplary, but it is instructive. Resurrection is a doctrine that is hard to believe. For that reason the Spirit needs to work in hearts as the gospel is shared.

*I pray that your Spirit will move hearts, Lord, to believe in your resurrection. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

April 10 - 15

“The Life of Jesus: Resurrection”

**Thursday, April 13 John 20:1-18**

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary’”*

 John is telling us about the reality of the resurrection, the power and certainty of Jesus’ life from death. This is no illusion, no vision or fantasy that serves to inspire the disciples in the midst of their distress following the crucifixion of Jesus. The tomb is empty. Peter and John run to the cave, examine the evidence, and step away stunned and hopeful. Likewise, when Mary meets with Jesus he is no phantom. While she doesn’t realize that it is Jesus, her assumption that he is the gardener shows that he is as real to her as any other person.

 John’s endearing story about Mary is a correction to those disciples (including Mary) who think that the resurrection points to a resumption of Jesus’ physical presence with them. On the contrary, Jesus is being glorified; his presence with his followers must change. Mary cannot “hold on” to the way Jesus has lived and worked with them but must instead rethink the nature of intimacy with Jesus. It will be a new intimacy, a spiritual intimacy, realized in the coming of the Holy Spirit, soon to be fulfilled.

*You are with me by your Spirit, Lord, and that is my reality. Amen.*

**Friday, April 14 Acts 17:16-21**

*“Paul was preaching the good news about the resurrection”*

 In Athens, the ancient world’s center of culture, religion, and philosophy, Paul discovered the difficulties of confronting the intellectual community with the Gospel, and in particular, the resurrection. Still, he resisted the temptation of diluting his message in order to score intellectual points with the two predominant philosophical schools of the day. The Epicureans believed that everything happened by chance, the gods were remote and uninvolved, and life’s purpose was to eat, drink, and be merry. The Stoics could not have been more opposite. For them, all of life was determined by the gods and must be lived according to their laws unhindered by emotion.

 This is why Paul’s preaching of Jesus and the resurrection caused such a stir in Athens. Against the Epicureans he taught about a God who has an eternal plan for the world, a plan fulfilled by faith in his Son who died for the sins of all humanity. Against the Stoics he spoke of a God who so loved the world that he was willing for his Son to come to earth in order to die and then be raised from the dead by his Father’s power.

*Though it is called foolish by some, Lord, I will proclaim your resurrection. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 15 1 Corinthians 15:12-23**

*“Christ, the firstfruits”*

 Apparently there were Christians in Corinth who, while believing that Christ was raised from the dead, were doubting that there would be any future resurrection. Paul declares that if we exclude resurrection for fellow believers, then we need to exclude resurrection for Jesus, as well. Paul paints a very dark picture of what it would be like to live in a world without resurrection.

 Paul then makes this “what if” scenario totally irrelevant with the affirmation that Christ is risen from the dead, and uses the analogy of the firstfruits of the harvest to show the effects of the resurrection of Christ. When the harvest was over and before grain could be sold in the markets or could be used by the people, the firstfruits of the harvest had to be offered to God. Only then could the grain be used. Building on that picture, Paul said that until God had raised Christ from the dead, no one had any hope. But Jesus’ resurrection became like the grain that had been offered to God: it opened the way for everyone to have the hope of resurrection. If Christ is raised, so will we be.

*Because you were resurrected, Lord, all who accept you will be also. Amen.*