

Can I Worry?

Scripture: Matthew 28: 1-10

Date: May 10, 2020

WORRY

My mother – Elsie Marion Kirkpatrick (Carter) held a strong legacy of love for her family – but also for her church. If there was a need for anything at the church - she was involved. She was a cornerstone of the two churches over the course of her life. No task too large – no task too small

GOSPEL WOMEN WORKING

In some ways – my mother – had she been around 2,000 years earlier would have been with the women going to the tomb. She would have recognized the need that someone had died and didn't have the time for a proper funeral – and things needed to be made right.

The various gospels all tell the same story – albeit with different details. The gospel of John – Mary Magdalene, the gospel of Mark and Matthew – Mary Magdalene + another Mary and the gospel of Luke – Mary Magdalene, another Mary and Johanna. Regardless of the details these women were doing what was needed. Jesus had died and didn't have time – with the Sabbath – to have the proper spices anointed on the body

GOSPEL WOMEN WORRYING

My mother would have fit in with these other women in another way. The gospel of Mark records that the women asking each other how they were going to overcome the issue of the stone. None of the gospels indicate a conversation between the women how they were going to negotiate the guards but it seems likely that there was a worried tone in their conversation. Not because they were women they were worried but because they were women they knew about worry.

WORRY DEFINED - UNKNOWN

Worry in its basic understanding is a glimpse into the unknown. It looks at the many questions that are unanswered. It asks even more questions about the unknown – often with potential answers of failure

WORRY DEFINED - UNCERTAIN

Worry looks at the future and sees uncertainty. A few weeks ago we looked at the doubts of Thomas and examined probability and possibility in light of levels of uncertainty of a positive outcome.

In both contexts – there are potentially unhappy results

WORRY RESPONSE - DREAD

In the costs of worry there are some who are driven by this fear and it takes them deeper into fear. They dread the result and they dread the process. Nothing good can happen and nothing good will happen. It's like taking a flashlight and shining it around a lit room because there can never be enough light – even if your light isn't really helping things be brighter.

WORRY RESPONSE - DENIAL

At the same time there are others who deny this fear. It's not that it doesn't exist – they refuse to acknowledge it - they deny it. It's like taking sun glasses and hiding behind the shades of perception than face the possibility of faltering or failure

In our world – we understand worry. Covid 19 has created much worry. When will it end – unknown. How will we survive – uncertain

WORRY CULTURE

Yet long before Covid 19 show it's face worry was very evident in many parts of our lives. Many of us worry about the parts of life outside of us - what if this fails? Many of us worry about the parts of life within us - what if I'm not good enough and I fail? The unknown of who we are and the uncertainty of what we can do creates a worry factor for us.

The women on their way to the tomb of Jesus had some very practical questions that they had to address:

How to move the stone?

How to deal with the guards

In your life similar questions might be posed for your worries

What are the stones are in your life?

Preventing you from moving forward

What are the guards in your life?

Determined not to let you succeed

WONDER**HOW? - GOD ENGAGES**

The women on the road to the tomb were witnesses to the miraculousness of God. The God who met Peter, Thomas and the disciples heading to Emmaus also met the women early on the Easter morning. Met them in a way that would both create fear and faith

Matthew's account records some extraordinary events. There is an earthquake – a violent earthquake. There is an angel comes down from heaven that looks like lightning. The Roman guards are petrified with fear with all of this and the angel speaks to the women.

Now I must confess I'm not an extensive world traveller and that I've been a Christian for many years BUT I've NEVER seen an angel - much less been directed by one ! Perhaps these were sights were common in the first century - after all - Jesus had healed many diseases and had raised people from the dead. Perhaps the women had seen enough miracles to not be thrown completely off the deep end

But, I think that if it were any of us – a first response might be - Huh? How did that happen? We have a scientific – technological – rational answer for almost everything in our culture that sometimes the mystery wanes. We look at a story like this and go

Did the angel have wings?

Was the angel dressed in white?

Did the soldiers recover?

We think of our culture and can't imagine an angel showing up - much less God. Sure, we see God through nature or through good things in our world and those are not void of God's presence but do we really – really think of God showing up in this way

We seek to know the HOW so much that we can miss out on the WOW

WOW! - GOD REVEALS JESUS

In Matthew's account - Jesus *suddenly* appears to the women. In John's account – Mary Magdalene encounters Jesus and at first she doesn't recognize Him. But then He calls her by name revealing Himself – yet again.

Our stories in this Easter season use the term reveal a lot. In the engagement of God into the world – revealing Himself – it is a revelation that humanity on its own could not get. They are stories filled with grace. A grace that bends over backwards to reassure us – gently – that God is still merciful. A grace that is filled with glory that God is still majestic.

The how of what is transformed into the wow of who!

WORSHIP

JESUS IS ALIVE

The women are filled with joy at seeing Jesus alive. There are earthquakes and there are angels but there is only one Jesus . They grasp onto the physical embodiment of Jesus and worship Him. Interestingly - Mary in John's account – clasped his feet but Jesus tells her not to hang on to Him because He has not yet ascended

I see a telling difference in these accounts for us today. We worship but sometimes the object or the focus of our worship is displaced. The women were worshipping not of the resurrection event or the new reality of Jesus but rather Jesus Himself. The Son of God – the Son of Man. The Messiah. The King of Kings.

I'M ALIVE

The worship experience does not end there because the women are directed to go tell the disciples – and they do. They hurry away – in Matthew's account – afraid yet filled with joy. They enact the gospel message of life that Jesus IS alive !!! Hallelujah !!

His resurrection becomes their - our – resurrection and His life becomes their – our life.

APPLICATION**EASTER TIDE - WORRY LOSES – WORSHIP WINS**

Can I worry? It's a question that is asked to legitimize the place in one's life. It's normal to look at the issues and be concerned. BUT if our concern is for our well being then the worry is misplaced because there is a certainty found in Christ for us.

Worry focuses on the circumstances, but worship focuses on the Christ.

Worry is the unknown – the uncertain in life but worship is the certainty of the known and revealed Christ

1 Peter 5: 7 reminds us to cast our anxiety on God and He will take care of us.

Philippians 4: 6-7 reminds us that instead of worrying we should pray – and the peace of God which is bigger than our understanding will guard and protect our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

In the celebration of the Lords' Supper we are reminded of God's grace to walk with us through the struggles in life. Matthew's account in chapter 11 reminds us to come to Jesus with our burdens and He will give us rest. To take His yoke upon us and the burden will be light.

In this period following Easter – it's easy to forget about all the celebrations and certainties of our faith in God as the date moves further beyond us. Yet in the ongoing and regular worship our worries fade into the distance as the power of the resurrection takes hold of us and guides us into worship in all we say and do as a reflection of our gratitude to God for His grace and His glory. In us, for us and through us.

AMEN