



Easter

See, Believe, and Share

April 20, 2014

Thought For The Week

Scriptures: Acts 10: 34a, 37-43 • Colossians 3: 1-4 • John 20: 1-18

Most intelligent Christians already know that the Bible contains many different types of human writing: narrative-history, allegory, metaphor, poetry, music (psalms) and, yes, lots of commentary as well.

Most Christian readers of the Bible already know how to discern between these various biblical genres.

As is our custom we are prepared to take a look at the biblical texts of one of the most important events in world history: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If you had the time to read the story of the resurrection all at once in all four gospel writers, you might be surprised to find that there seem to be some contradictions in the texts. None of the four interpret the basic event of Resurrection in quite the same way.

The reason they do not is because none of them were present at the event on Easter morning. None of the four ever knew Jesus personally. The only Jesus they know is the Risen Jesus culled from the stories passed on to them by those who were actually present. In other words, they are simply commenting on what they heard from those who were actually present at the time. By the time of the evangelists these stories had been passed down many times. Finally, they were “written up by each evangelist, individually and passed on from church to church.

The important thing to remember is that each of the evangelists interpreted and wrote up the Easter event in his own unique way given the information he had heard from others. So, the four (gospel) writings we have of the one Easter event are not history, as we know it, but personal evaluation or commentary. That is why we have four different Easter stories (commentaries) all reflecting on the one same historical event. It is important to say, therefore, that there is one historical Easter event, but at least four personal commentaries on it.

You might even say that the Resurrection is such an all-encompassing world event; there will never appear a final definitive commentary on it. It is literally filled with meaning or countless meanings.

In conclusion then, the basic question to ask especially on Easter Sunday is this: “How did the sacred authors, the four Evangelists, and their readers come to experience the Risen (transformed) Jesus?”

We have the answer to that right in the four texts of the gospels.

So now we have the facts (the raising of Jesus) and we have the meaning, the ways the four evangelists imagined it after having heard the stories from those present.

Let me suggest that this is exactly what Christians have been doing from the earliest Christian times. They have been trying to discern the meaning of the resurrection as it appears out of their own lives.

That is also what we today are invited to do, namely to identify not only the fact of the resurrection, but also to ask how its meaning arises out of our daily experiences. In other words, resurrection keeps happening every day for those who believe in Jesus rising and how it affects the way life looks to us today. In some sense, we must say that Jesus keeps rising again in the heart of every believer. In a

sense, Jesus' resurrection never ceases; it is a source of new life for every believer throughout history to this very day in 2014 in this age of history.

So, I ask this question of myself and of you: where will you find the experience of transformed life today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow?

Stewardship Thought For The Week

How Should "Stewardship Living" Affect Our Lives?

Our finances tend to be the key area that people refer to when speaking of stewardship. I think the main reason is that often money is one of the most difficult things for people to give. At least for me that used to be the case. I was okay giving my energy, time, or sharing my abilities, but money was not something that I was interested in giving away. That is probably why God had to work on me for so long to help me lose my attitude!

One of the things that helped me was keeping focus on the fact that I came into the world with nothing and would leave with nothing. I began to look at all my possessions as merely being "on loan." This has helped me begin to see myself more as a "steward" rather than a "possessor".

Another excellent lesson came from a friend of mine saying that he was talking to a well-known violinist about his violin. The violinist had mentioned that the violin was a couple hundred years old and worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars. The interesting point he remembered from the conversation was the way the violinist viewed himself as a steward of the instrument. He knew that many great musicians had played the instrument before he was even born. He was also not so naive to think that he would be the last to play the fine instrument. He understood that it was just temporarily passing through his hands.

The witness of the violinist's outlook on his violin has really helped me get a better understanding of the role possessions should have in my life. Changing my thinking in this way has affected how I handle my money and even my weekly buying decisions. It's not that having possessions is a good or bad thing; just that it needs to be kept in the proper perspective.