

John 18:1-19:42

Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

*"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."
And that is what the soldiers did.*

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his

mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Are you ready with your bells? ... Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Welcome. If you are visiting with us this morning, we are glad that you are here, especially on this particular morning, a morning that changed the world. We are grateful that you have chosen to celebrate here with us and we would like to extend an invitation. We would like to invite you to join in and be part of what God is doing here at Redeemer.

(Put on 3D glasses) So, how many remember of you these? I had them on four years ago, right here on Easter morning. Have you been to a 3D movie since then? You know, I'm still not quite sure how they do it, but you put on these glasses and the image is somehow converted or affected in such a way so that your mind is able to see the movie in a whole new way. Somehow, with these pieces of plastic, your perception is broadened and deepened, enabling you to see something that was beyond your limited abilities just moments before.

I remember when I first saw a 3-D TV. I shared it with you back when I wore these before. I was in Best Buy walking past the TV section. Right up front, right on the aisle, this very large flat screen TV caught my eye. It grabbed my attention because it was out of focus and I thought to myself, what a terrible way to try to sell a TV. Then, on the table right in front of the screen, I saw a box of these (point to glasses). I put on a pair, this pair, and the whole world changed.

Amazingly, the picture snapped into focus and the scene took on a whole new dimension, literally.

So, there I was, standing in front of this new reality, embracing my expanded perception, and it occurred to me that Easter is like a pair of extra-dimensional, spiritual glasses that brings God's reality into our existence. The resurrection opens our eyes to see beyond what we can't experience within the confines of our capabilities. What seemed hard to comprehend before Easter, is brought into a new clarity. (Now, just in case you are wondering. I didn't walk off with these under my jacket. I explained to the sales person what I wanted them for and asked where I could buy a pair, and she said, "Just take those.")

Easter brings our entire existence into focus. Now, if that seems like an over-the-top statement, the truth is that it is really an understatement. The resurrection of Jesus enables our minds to take our entire story, and the entire story of humanity right up to this very morning, and see it in a new way. Through the glasses of Easter, our perception is snapped into focus and expanded beyond our meager physical and intellectual abilities.

Think again back to King David. I wonder how many people read what he wrote in Psalm 22, which was our Psalm for Good Friday, and scratched their heads because it just didn't make sense through their blurry vision. He wrote: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death." A few verses later: "For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet-- I can count all my bones-- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." When David wrote those words around 1000BC they had to have left people scratching their heads because what he was describing, Roman crucifixion, hadn't been invented yet.

He described Jesus on the cross. I am poured out like water...my energy and my life are drained. My bones are out of joint...the weight of a person hanging on the cross often pulled their arms out of joint. They have pierced my hands and my feet. David's words had to be confusing to those who read them in his day, but through the eyes of Easter they are crystal clear.

How about Isaiah? He spoke of the Messiah as "despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; without esteem. He said that the coming Christ would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. He would be wounded for our transgressions; crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement that would bring us our peace would be put on him. Our iniquity would be taken on by Him and through his suffering we would be healed. These are words written 800 years prior to Jesus' birth and must have left people confused. They thought that the Messiah would be a great military leader. A successful General. And so, Isaiah's words had to

be fuzzy at best, but through the expanded perception of the resurrection they made perfect sense.

How about Jesus, himself? How about that itinerant preacher; the son of a woodworker from Nazareth? How about that person who told everyone gathered in a synagogue one day that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and that he was the anointed one? He told them that he was the one anointed to preach good news to the poor and liberty to the captives, and to bring new sight to the blind. What about that person who told them that in their hearing in that synagogue those words from Daniel were now fulfilled...in HIM.

What about all those crazy stories that were spreading rapidly through the countryside about this person named Jesus healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and strong legs to a person lame since birth? What about walking on water, raising a guy from the dead who had been in the tomb for four days, and controlling nature by calming a raging storm with just an upraised hand and a firm rebuke? What about feeding five thousand men and their families from just a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish? What about re-building a torn down temple in three days?

Absolute silliness, right? Or maybe the picture was just too blurry to really make out what was truly happening and no matter how much they squinted and cocked their head to one side or the other they couldn't wrap their minds around it. But through the new perception of Easter, the events of the last three years of Jesus' life snap into focus ...and they take our breath away. New life, new vision, something not just rebuilt in three days, but re-made entirely new in an instant.

All things take on a whole new clarity when looked at through the 20/20, new dimensional vision of Easter. Quaint saying of old religious people in some old religious text are recognized as prophesy. Unbelievable stories of the miraculous become a way for a loving God to point to His Son in order to reach a hurting, confused, and lost world. Teachings that to some seem to be too harsh, or not tolerant enough, or overly oppressive become the loving truth of God that bring a message that enhances life, not restricts it; that expands love, not constricts it; that fulfill dreams, not squashes them. The eyes of Easter bring a new meaning to our whole existence.

So; considering how important this day is to all days, past, present, and future; the one real question for us today would have to be, "How can we, today, believe the story of Easter?" The best way, I think, is to look at how the new perception of Easter affected the people who were there, men and women, young and old, various backgrounds, all witnesses to the events that we remember and celebrate today. Those people became the first 3D people in a 2D world.

What happened to their lives when they slipped on resurrection glasses for the first time and saw what was behind the blur of their world? Well, they changed to their very core. They left everything and devoted the rest of their lives to telling everyone about what laid behind the

normal perception of the world. They told the truth, even though they knew that their telling of their story would probably cost them everything, including even their lives at the hands of 2D people who didn't want to hear about a 3D existence. A group of 12 faithful Jewish men, who were raised to believe that they were to honor the Sabbath at all costs or risk the wrath of God, abandoned it and established a new holy day, on the day of the week that their resurrection glasses were issued. And they abandoned the system of sacrifice that had, they thought, assured forgiveness. They abandoned it because the sacrifice of Christ had accomplished reconciliation for all people for all time. And for the rest of their lives these people, who were so profoundly impacted by the truth of Easter, rejoiced each day with the words... "Alleluia, Christ is Risen!!" (Congregation responds: "The Lord is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!")

Easter changes everything. Easter opens a whole new dimension that the world has forgotten even exists. It is a dimension of profound Love, real Truth, and expansive life and joy.

If you have already found your Easter glasses, if you can see the potential for the world through Christ and His resurrection, then I rejoice with you this day. Alleluia, Christ is Risen! (Believers respond, "The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia"). If, however, you haven't found your Easter glasses yet, I invite you to come and see. Come and see what you have been searching for that the world cannot provide. Come and see what is possible. Come and experience a life beyond anything you have ever imagined.

Amen