

feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading . (Isaiah 40:11)

April 2, 2013

Dearest family,

Christ is still risen!! It was wonderful to have such a full house last Sunday, and to worship and take communion together. Taken as a whole, the words of the hymns and songs were thorough in their presentation both of the nature and character of Jesus, and his atoning work, as well as of the meaning of the events of Holy Week. As I suggested on Sunday, our service was very much like a catechism of the resurrection event, both fact and meaning. In a similar catechetical (what a lovely word!) way, my message took you through over 40 scriptures that help fill in the blank after: BECAUSE HE WAS RAISED.... The practical question is simply this: What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make to our daily lives as Christians, to how we expect to both live and die?

But I am also in a Psalm Pseries, so as I did on Palm Sunday, I acknowledged the connection between the psalms and this day. As we looked last week at psalms like 22, 31, 41, 69, 110 and 118, it is understandable why they are quoted so much in the narrative of Holy Week, and particularly in relation to

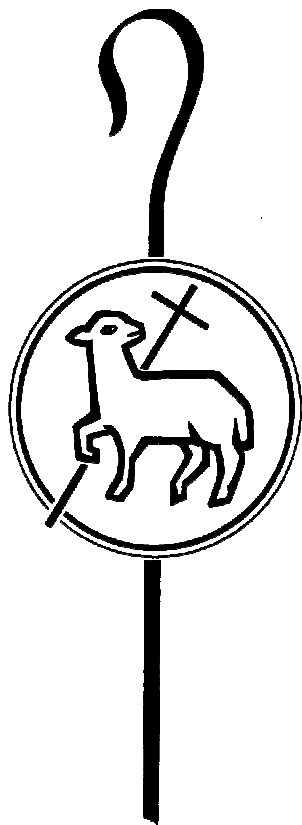
the suffering and the death of Jesus. But what about the resurrection? Is there any psalm that relates to it? There are certainly foreshadowings in other parts of the Old Testament:

- Job, arguably the earliest written book in the Bible, announces *“I know that my Redeemer lives”* and goes on to say that even when the worms have destroyed his body, *“yet in my flesh shall I see God. I myself will see Him with my own eyes”* (19: 25-27)
- In Hebrews 11:17-19 we learn that Abraham believed in God’s power to raise the dead Isaac.
- Isaiah prophesies that God will swallow up death in victory (25:8) He also talks about the suffering servant, Jesus, prolonging his days and seeing the outcomes of His travail (53:9-10). In a prophetic song of praise Isaiah says *“your dead will live; their bodies will rise.”* (26:19)
- Daniel speaks of those *“who sleep in the dust of the earth”* who will *“awake – some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”* (12:2)

But what of the Psalms?

- In Psalm 17:15 David talks about awaking and says *“I will see your face.”*
- There is an intimation possibly in Psalm 139:8 when he declares that even if he made his bed in Sheol, *“you are there.”*
- In Psalm 49:15 there is a confident declaration: *“God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.”*

But for the clearest link we read Acts 2:22-36 and Acts 13: 26-36, sermons of Peter and Paul. Peter says: *“But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25 David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ ... 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand 35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”” 36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Je-*



sus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Paul preaches: **32** “We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors **33** he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “‘You are my son; today I have become your father.’ **34** God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, “‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ **35** So it is also stated elsewhere: “‘You will not let your holy one see decay.’” **36** “Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed.”

A remarkable agreement and consistency is presented here in the use of Psalm 16 both by Peter and Paul, no less. Old Testament predictions are related to New Testament fulfillments. In Psalm 16, in its original context, David is expressing confidence in two things: that the Lord is His **portion**, and that the Lord is His **preserver**. At first, he only appears to be talking about a deliverance **from** a potential brush with death. Was he actually thinking about the idea of eternal life, about resurrection, about deliverance **out of** death? Much has been written about this, but what is clear is that scripture itself provides the interpretation in the texts we read from Acts. Furthermore, Peter quotes Psalm 110 in the same context as Psalm 16 and we already know that Jesus himself used that same passage in his arguments with the teachers of the law about the question, “Whose son is the Christ?” (Lk. 20:41) “*Jesus said to them...David himself declares in the Book of Psalms...*” In the same way that Peter gives the same exegesis as Jesus of Psalm 110, It is almost certain that the exegesis of Psalm 16 that you hear Peter giving is that of Jesus himself, when he spoke to them from the Psalms about things concerning himself. Peter is explicit that David spoke of the Christ, the ultimate Holy One. He could not have been talking of himself because he had no expectation of personal resurrection. In any case, David died and was buried and, as Paul said, his body did decay. “*Seeing what was ahead he spoke of the resurrection of Christ.*” (2:31) The witness to this fulfillment is affirmed by “*we are all witnesses of the fact.*” (2:32) Prophetic witnesses and present witnesses are in agreement. The prophetic of the past combines with the personal present, the spoken with the seen, the explanation with the experience. In the same way, Paul brings scripture and history together.

As you read through the passion narratives you will hear a repeated refrain in all gospel writers.

- In the upper room when Judas puts his hand in the dish: “That the scriptures may be fulfilled” (Jn.13:18)
- In the High priestly prayer of John 17:12 “so that scripture may be fulfilled”
- At the arrest of Jesus in the garden: “All this was done that the scriptures might be fulfilled.” (Mt.26:54-56)
- At the cross when it was observed that Jesus’ bones were not broken: “These things were done that the scriptures might be fulfilled” (Jn.19:36)
- At the tomb when Peter and John arrived and tried to process what they saw: “They still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.” (Jn.20:9)
- The encounter on the Emmaus Road: “He explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.” (Lk.24:27)
- At one of Jesus’ last appearances to the disciples: “This is what I told you when I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures. He told them: this is what was written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third

day.” (Lk.24:44-46) Indeed he told them when he was still with them. In Jn.5:39 Jesus had said “You search the scriptures...and these are they which testify of me.” When Jesus cleared out the money-changers from the Temple, it says that the disciples remembered Psalm 69. Then, when asked for a miraculous sign, Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days...After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” (Jn.2:19-22)

- Are we therefore surprised that the very words that Peter spoke in the upper room, as recorded in Acts 1:16 were the Psalms: “Brothers, the scriptures had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David...” Then a few verses later we read: “”For” said Peter, “it is written in the Psalms.” (2:20 referring to Ps. 69:25 and Ps. 109:10) Or that the first apostolic evangelistic sermon ever given, by Peter again, begins with: “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...” and then he goes on to quote the psalms again, as we have just seen. Sounds to me that Jesus taught them well and they learned well.
- And are we therefore surprised that Paul, the greatest of the apostles, would sum up his entire preaching like this: I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” (1 Cor.15:3-4)

Do you believe this? Do you believe the scriptures? The witness of Jesus himself, about himself, particularly about his resurrection, is firmly founded in scripture. His view of his own mission, his prophecies about his own death and resurrection, are both rooted in earlier prophecy but also corroborative of those prophecies. So the key issue on an “Easter day” is not about what I should say about the resurrection, so much as it is about what scripture speaks about it.

It is clear then why those who oppose the Christian gospel are so committed to first subvert and minimize the credence and credibility of the scriptures, and it explains the relentless attack of unbelief on the gospel accounts during the last 100 years, despite them being the most attested writings by extant manuscripts that exists. You may have read Homer’s Iliad at school or College and I guarantee that you did not spend most of the course doing a study that demythologized, deconstructed and generally debunked the text. Yet in all literature, the Iliad is the SECOND most attested and proof-texted work: no less than 643 manuscripts survive. Incredible! Second only to what? You guessed it...the New Testament with 24,633 manuscripts with not a single point of doctrine hinging on a variant reading!

So what do the scriptures tell us are the consequences for our daily lives and experience, because God raised Jesus from the dead? Well, if you want all the scriptures I went through you’re going to have download the message! If you take the effort to do that it means you really are committed to know what these outcomes are. Be blessed in your meditation and study and turn the points into an active prayer list for your own life. Make sure that none of the pastoral questions I asked by way of application have unresolved answers for your spiritual life right now.

As I said at the beginning, He is still risen, and his resurrection power is TOWARD YOU!

Pastorally yours
Stuart

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