

Luke 24:1-12
April 4, '10
Easter

LENTEN LESSONS FROM LUKE
"MY FAVORITE WORD IN THE BIBLE"

IT'S ALWAYS SEEMED RATHER UNFAIR TO ME THAT, BECAUSE I'M UP HERE EVERY SUNDAY & YOU'RE OUT THERE, YOU EVENTUALLY LEARN MORE ABOUT *ME* THAN I LEARN ABOUT *YOU*.

IT JUST NATURALLY HAPPENS THAT, OVER TIME, YOU LEARN SOME THINGS ABOUT ME.

YOU LEARN ABOUT SOME OF MY FAVORITE THINGS.

IF YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING OVER THE YEARS, YOU KNOW THAT MY FAVORITE MOVIE IS "PINOCCHIO."

MY FAVORITE ARTIST IS VAN GOGH.

MY FAVORITE MUSICIAN IS STEVIE WONDER.

MY FAVORITE SPORT IS HOCKEY.

MY FAVORITE SEASON IS FALL BECAUSE IT MEANS WINTER IS COMING.

SORRY – I'M FROM MICHIGAN.

THAT BEING SAID, THOUGH, I KNOW I'VE LIVED IN INDIANA FOR A LONG TIME BECAUSE MY FAVORITE TEAM IN THE FINAL FOUR WAS BUTLER & I WAS AS DELIGHTED AS ANYONE ELSE HERE TO SEE THEM BEAT MICHIGAN STATE YESTERDAY IN THE FINAL FOUR.

TODAY, I'D LIKE TO SHARE TWO MORE FAVORITES OF MINE.

MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY HAS ALWAYS BEEN EASTER.

FOR A LONG TIME I THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE EASTER DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE BEEN INVADED BY SECULARITY AS MUCH AS CHRISTMAS.

A RECENT REPORT, THOUGH, CHALLENGED THAT CONTENTION.

IT SAID, "*FEWER THAN HALF OF AMERICANS MENTIONED JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTER, ACCORDING TO A SURVEY RELEASED LAST MONTH BY CHRISTIAN RESEARCHERS THE BARNA GROUP.*"

AT THE SAME TIME, THE NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION REPORTS WE'LL SPEND MORE THAN \$13 BILLION ON THE HOLIDAY FOR FOOD, CLOTHES, CANDY AND GREETING CARDS."

THAT BEING SAID, EASTER STILL REMAINS MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY.

INTERESTINGLY, THOUGH, THE EASTER SEASON – OR , AT LEAST HOLY WEEK – ARE FAR BUSIER & MORE STRESSFUL FOR A CHURCH STAFF THAN CHRISTMAS.

BUT THE PERSONAL SIDE OF THE HOLIDAY DOESN'T SEEM TO BE NEARLY AS CHALLENGING AS CHRISTMAS IS.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT'S WHY I LIKED EASTER MORE.

WE CAN REALLY FOCUS ON THE MEANING OF THE SEASON MORE EASILY THAN WE CAN ANY OTHER HOLIDAY.

I'VE RECENTLY COME TO REALIZE, THOUGH, THAT THERE'S ANOTHER REASON THAT EASTER IS MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY.

IT'S BECAUSE THIS IS THE HOLIDAY THAT GIVES MEANING TO EVERY OTHER HOLIDAY.

IN FACT, THIS IS THE HOLIDAY THAT GIVES MEANING TO LIFE ITSELF.

AND THAT LEADS ME TO ANOTHER FAVORITE OF MINE – MY FAVORITE WORD IN THE BIBLE.

YOU MIGHT THINK IT WOULD BE HOPE OR LOVE OR JOY OR PEACE.

IN ALL HONESTY, IN ANOTHER SERMON, IT MIGHT BE ANY ONE OF THOSE.

BUT I THINK, FOR A LONG TIME MY FAVORITE WORD IN THE BIBLE IS A WORD THAT IS FOUND NO FEWER THAN SIX TIMES IN THESE TWELVE VERSES WE'VE READ THIS MORNING.

IT'S A WORD THAT OPENS THE ENTIRE CHAPTER – A WORD THAT OPENS THE CLOSING VERSE OF THE PASSAGE.

IT'S THE SIMPLE LITTLE CONJUNCTION – “BUT.”

WHAT A STRANGE WAY TO BEGIN A CHAPTER!

“BUT...ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK...”

I WAS STRUCK RECENTLY BY THE NUMBER OF TIMES IT APPEARS IN THESE VERSES.

I STARTED THINKING OF THE NUMBER OF TIMES IT APPEARS THROUGHOUT LUKE'S GOSPEL.

IT'S EVERYWHERE – FROM BEGINNING TO END!

IN THE BIRTH NARRATIVE, THE SHEPHERDS WERE TERRIFIED. *BUT* THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, FEAR NOT...”

IN THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN, A LEVITE PASSED BY ON THE OTHER SIDE. *BUT* A SAMARITAN CAME TO HIM...”

IN THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON, THE YOUNGER SON RETURNS & TELLS HIS FATHER HE ISN'T WORTHY TO BE CALLED HIS SON. *BUT* THE FATHER SAID, “BRING OUT THE BEST ROBE & PUT IT ON HIM.”

IN LUKE, WHENEVER THINGS SEEM TO BE MOVING IN A NEGATIVE DIRECTION – IN THE TIMES THAT DARKNESS SEEMS TO BE SETTING IN – THAT MARVELOUS LITTLE, SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS CONJUNCTION SHOWS UP & CHANGES EVERYTHING!

SO IT IS IN THE EASTER STORY.

AT THE END OF THE 23RD CHAPTER, WHEN DEATH SEEMS TO HAVE THE LAST WORD, WE READ “*BUT ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK...*”

LATER, WE LEARN THAT THE STONE WAS ROLLED FROM THE TOMB, “*BUT WHEN THEY WENT IN, THEY DID NOT FIND THE BODY.*”

THE WOMEN WERE TERRIFIED & BOWED THEIR FACES TO THE GROUND, *BUT* THEY WERE ASKED WHY THEY SOUGHT THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD.

THEY WERE TOLD HE WASN'T THERE, *BUT* HAS RISEN!

THE DISCIPLES DIDN'T BELIEVE THE WOMEN, *BUT* PETER RAN TO THE TOMB.

ALL THE NEGATIVES – ALL THE SADNESS – ALL THE DOUBTS & ALL THE DARKNESS ARE COUNTERACTED
& DISPELLED BY THIS SIMPLE CONJUNCTION!

SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT IT'S "AS IF LUKE IS GRABBING US BY THE LAPELS, STOPPING US IN OUR
TRACKS & FORCING US TO UNDERSTAND THAT NO MATTER WHAT WE'VE HEARD, WE HAVEN'T HEARD THE WHOLE
STORY YET."

THE GREAT THEOLOGIAN KARL BARTH, IN HIS MASTERFUL WAY, HAS SAID "THE GOSPEL IS NOT A
NATURAL 'THEREFORE' BUT A MIRACULOUS 'NEVERTHELESS.'"

THE WHOLE GOSPEL ITSELF IS A DEFIANT CONJUNCTION, CHALLENGING US TO BELIEVE WHAT THE
WORLD & OUR COMMON SENSE TELLS US IS IMPOSSIBLE.

BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF WE REALLY BELIEVE IT?

HOW WOULD OUR LIVES BE DIFFERENT IF WE FULLY BELIEVED THE IMPOSSIBLE.

IT MEANS THERE ARE DEFIANT CONJUNCTIONS IN OUR OWN LIVES AS WELL.

IT MEANS THAT INSTEAD OF LOOKING AT OUR EXISTENCE ON EARTH AS A PROGRESSION FROM LIFE INTO
DEATH, WE CAN SEE IT INSTEAD AS DEATH INTO LIFE.

WE ARE NOT MOVING TOWARDS DEATH, *BUT* TOWARDS LIFE.

THE PASSING OF EACH DAY BRINGS US, NOT CLOSER TO DEATH, *BUT* TO LIFE.

YOU'VE EXPERIENCED SORROW & GRIEF, *BUT* THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE IS AN EVER-PRESENT
REALITY.

YOU'VE KNOWN HEARTACHE & PAIN, *BUT* A NEW DAY IS DAWNING.

YOU'VE VIOLATED GOD'S COMMANDMENTS & LIVED A LIFE OF SELF-SERVING PLEASURE, *BUT*
FORGIVENESS & GRACE ARE GRANTED.

AT EVERY TURN, WHENEVER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES SEEM TO KNOCK YOU TO THE GROUND, THAT
IRREPRESSIBLE CONJUNCTION SHOWS UP & LIFTS YOU TO YOUR FEET & TELLS YOU RESURRECTION IS REAL.

BECAUSE IT IS REAL, THERE'S NO REASON TO KEEP LIVING AS IF IT WEREN'T.

THAT'S WHY THIS HOLIDAY IS MY FAVORITE.

IT'S BECAUSE IT'S THIS HOLIDAY THAT MAKES SENSE OF ALL THE OTHER HOLIDAYS.

IT'S BECAUSE THIS HOLIDAY MAKES SENSE OUT OF LIFE.

IN 1959, TWO JAPANESE SOLDIERS WERE DISCOVERED IN A JUNGLE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

THEY HAD KEPT TO THEMSELVES FOR 14 YEARS, SECLUDED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD.

THEY WERE STILL FIGHTING WORLD WAR II.

THEY DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS OVER & WOULD SHOOT AT ANYONE WHO GOT CLOSE ENOUGH TO TELL THEM
IT WAS.

IT WAS RATHER FOOLISH OF THEM, OF COURSE.

BUT NO MORE FOOLISH THAN IT IS FOR US TO CONTINUE TO LIVE AS THOUGH DEATH HAD THE LAST
WORD WITH JESUS.

JESUS DIED – *BUT* HE HAS RISEN.

MAYBE TO LIVE IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF THAT TRUTH JUST SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

I LOVE THE STORY A FATHER TOLD ABOUT HIS YOUNG SON A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO.

THINK ABOUT THIS & YOU CAN PROBABLY ENVISION IT JUST AS IT HAPPENED.

THE LITTLE BOY WAS A GREAT FAN OF BOTH MISTER ROGERS & CAPTAIN KANGAROO.

THE BOY FAITHFULLY WATCHED BOTH SHOWS & ONE DAY IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT MISTER ROGERS
WOULD BE PAYING A VISIT TO THE CAPTAIN KANGAROO SHOW.

THE BOY WAS ECSTATIC.

BOTH OF HIS HEROES – TOGETHER ON THE SAME SHOW!

EVERY MORNING, THE BOY WOULD ASK, “*IS IT TODAY THAT MISTER ROGERS WILL BE ON CAPTAIN
KANGAROO?*”

FINALLY, THE DAY ARRIVED & THE WHOLE FAMILY GATHERED AROUND THE TELEVISION.

THERE THEY WERE – MISTER ROGERS & CAPTAIN KANGAROO TOGETHER!

THE BOY WATCHED FOR A MINUTE, BUT THEN, SURPRISINGLY, GOT UP & WANDERED FROM THE ROOM.

HIS FATHER WAS DUMBFOUNDED BY THIS.

HE FOLLOWED HIM OUT OF THE ROOM & ASKED, “*WHAT IS IT, SON? IS ANYTHING WRONG?*”

THE BOY LOOKED UP AT HIM & SAID, “*IT’S TOO GOOD. IT’S JUST TOO GOOD!*”

MAYBE THAT’S A PROBLEM YOU FACE IN TRYING TO BELIEVE THE PROMISE OF THE RESURRECTION.

IT’S TOO GOOD. IT’S JUST TOO GOOD!

SIN & SORROW, SICKNESS & SADNESS, GRIEF & DEATH ARE VERY REAL.

BUT, THEY NEVER HAVE THE LAST WORD.

THE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION IS REAL & IT’S EVEN BETTER THAN MISTER ROGERS & CAPTAIN
KANGAROO TOGETHER ODN THE SAME SHOW! AMEN.

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