

## Easter 2010 Luke 24:1-12 – OSL, Hermosa, SD

There was a man who spent a good part of his life trying to flee God. He tried everything to silence God's call by always running in the opposite direction. He was frightened by God's call and what God would want him to do with his life. Then, one Sunday, this man found himself in church after being gone for about twenty years. When asked as to why he returned, he explained it in three words: God got me. (Willomen story)

What does it take to believe and to change someone? What does it take to "be gotten"? That question was asked a couple of years ago in *Time* magazine about movies. Do movies change people and how are they changed? The *Time* poll found out that 30% changed their mind about an issue after seeing a movie. 20% were persuaded to give money to a charity or to volunteer their time. And 10% were caused to vote differently after seeing a movie.

Do you think that movies make a difference in people's lives? Ask about who has seen these movies: *Supersize Me*, *Blood Diamond* (Leonardo DiCaprio) and *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore. Those who make these movies hope that their movies will cause change and/or make a difference. *Supersize Me*: after the movie, McDonalds put healthy items on their menus and took supersizing off of it, but said the changes were already planned. But what about the direction that fast food places are making today? It seems that the emphasis isn't on the healthy choices, but upon how much fat you can get between two pieces of bread. *Blood Diamond*: Brought a conflict-free diamond certification to light. *An Inconvenient Truth*: Brought environmental issues to the forefront w/speakers going around the world and the film being shown in schools. It also brought those together who felt that what was shown in the movie isn't the truth. So, in many ways, the change brought about by these movies is the debate that it brings in getting people talking.

What about the Christian story/faith? Can movies make a difference? Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. Who's seen it? It netted \$370 million dollars when it opened, yet according to a Barna poll, less than 1% of those who saw the film said that they became a Christian as a result of seeing the film. However, 18% of the audience said it changed some aspect of their religious behavior. So, most likely, the majority of people who went to see the movie were already Christians. I can't imagine that too many non-Christians would be interested in that movie. It is a gruesome portrayal of Jesus' death on the cross. And it didn't seem to significantly change people's lives or make a difference. Why?

It's just a movie. There is no connection of any kind to it. Movies do not interact w/you in the way that you can interact with another person. There's no follow-up unless the viewer reaches out.

What else is missing, specifically in *The Passion of the Christ* movie, is that it leaves us with a dead Jesus on the cross and barely hints that there is more to the story. And yet, we cannot leave people in the depths of darkness and death of Jesus, for that is not the end. It was a necessary part of it, but not the end. A new day dawns and Jesus lives again.

What did it take for the women and the other disciples to believe that Jesus was raised? They come to the tomb (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women with them) "at the early dawn," that threatening time when Jesus usually performed some of his most famous wonders. The women are there with the spices that they have prepared for Jesus' body. But there's a problem. The stone is rolled away and Jesus' body is NOT in the tomb. Their puzzlement turns to fear when two men in dazzling clothes

appear. In their terror, they bow with their faces to the ground only to be told those amazing Easter morning words, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” The women are reminded of the words that Jesus had told them while he was with them and they leave the tomb to go and tell what has happened. God finally got them. When they tell what they saw (and did not see) at the tomb, the men don’t believe (typical, isn’t it?) So Peter runs to verify the story and realizes that what the women told them was the truth. The stone is rolled away and Jesus is not there. He returns, amazed at what has happened.

It is interesting that in our Easter Sunday gospel reading in Luke, we do not get to see or hear Jesus! In the years we read it from Matthew, at least we get the sudden appearance of Jesus meeting them and telling them not to be afraid. At least in Matthew’s gospel we get an interaction with the resurrected Christ. Not here. And yet, the stone being rolled away and the tomb being empty bring change and make a difference in our lives. On this Easter morning, our reading leaves us with the empty tomb and hearts filled with hope for what that means. The risen Christ will soon make an appearance to his disciples, going to them, finding them on the road and finding them gathered together in Jerusalem.

Does Christ make a difference in your life? Do you recognize that no matter what you do and where you go, the Risen Christ will come to you? There are many things that I can do as a pastor, but one thing I cannot do is make someone believe in Jesus. And I know for sure that you cannot do that either. The thing that we can do is to tell the story and introduce the Risen Christ to those who do not know, to those who have forgotten and to those who seem to be fleeing from God out of fear because they think that God may change them. And you know what – they’d be right. God does change who we are. The Risen Christ will overcome all barriers in order to set you free and bring you faith. It’s God who “gets us” through his Son, Jesus the Christ.

Your faith is based on this amazing Easter miracle. Your relationship to God, thank God, is not based on what you can feel or think or any number of other requirements that someone might want to put on your shoulders. It’s based upon the fact that the Risen Christ came to you. The truth will get you every time and we are able to join together to say, “God got me.”