

Easter April 24, 2011 Matthew 28 – “Walking with Jesus. . He walks with you”

Footsteps

Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! We greet each other w/this Easter greeting. What does this Easter greeting really mean, especially in light of following Christ’s footsteps to the cross?

- The splash of water poured over feet once Peter realized that Jesus needed to become the servant
- The slow, dragging rhythm of tired and beaten feet walking through the streets on the way to the hill
- The clang of nails piercing those same feet as they are raised on the cross
- The hushed footsteps of his followers as they come to claim his body and bring it off the cross, carefully and lovingly walking towards the tomb where they would leave his body – the stone rolled in front to block anyone going in or allowing the body out. The tired feet of the guards pacing back and forth in front of the closed tomb.

We’ve been following the footsteps of Jesus through the Lenten season, deep into Holy Week, until arriving here today, Easter morning, where we find the empty tomb.

What were the footsteps of the women like as they headed towards the tomb to prepare the body? Were their footsteps slow and heavy? How about the frantic fear when the earth began to shake? Or when they arrived at the tomb and the stone was rolled away?

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark, that threatening time when Jesus usually performed some of his most famous wonders/miracles. She boldly ventured forth into the darkness to search out Jesus. The gospel of Matthew doesn’t give you the sense of doubt and fear that the other gospels give you, but you know some of it must have been there because of the earthquake, the presence of angels and their message to not be afraid. There will be many misunderstandings, misinterpretations and mistruths about what happened on that Easter morning. And yet, what the gospel of Matthew focuses upon is what brought the disciples to believe in the resurrected Christ – it was an interaction with the resurrected Christ. The Christ, who says, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

What *were* their footsteps like when they walked away from the tomb? I’m guessing after what they saw and who they saw, their footsteps quickened and they were lighter on their feet. They interact with the real Jesus; the women fell to the dusty, rocky path and grabbed Jesus’ feet – his real feet, the feet of the resurrected Christ! I’m not a foot person, but to be able to touch the very feet of the risen Christ – the one who was lost to them; the one who had made promises to them; the one whom they may have doubted when they felt alone and lost – those feet, the feet of Jesus, I wouldn’t want to let go!

I think it’s fitting that we sit here on Easter morning with images of footprints all around us and read about the women touching the feet of the resurrected Christ! The words he had spoken

about what would happen have actually come true – they are touching the very truth of Christ as they reach out to touch the very feet of Jesus who walked a difficult yet glorious journey.

It is the risen Christ who walks with you. It is only through the power of that resurrection that we are able to have the faith to walk the footsteps of our own journeys in this world; knowing that the one who came before us walked into the darkness of death to bring us into the light of amazing love and eternal life.

It is this Christ, who walked the grit, dust, grime, blood, and very death on his journey because he knew he was needed for *our* journey.

What is Easter? What does it mean? There can be a lot of fun to have with Easter, but we've seen what the journey has been like for Jesus from his walk (and then ride) through Jerusalem with palms waving to the slow, and dreadful walk to the cross and the journey for Jesus to death itself – but it didn't end there. So what is Easter truly about? How can we say that Easter greeting to one another with such conviction?

“Our sharing in the passion of Christ is not intended to increase our guilt and shame but to convince us ever more of the great love that God has for us, and to awaken in us an answering love.” (Helen Julian CSF in *The Road to Emmaus*, p175)

It's Easter! The tomb was empty! It's true that God loves us THAT much!

Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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