

Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 81: The Great Commission

Day 560: Do not be afraid

Suddenly there was a severe earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were shaken and became like dead men because they were so afraid of him. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; ... (Matthew 28:2-5)

The Messiah has died. Everything they hoped for, all they had aligned their lives around for the past three years was over. Mary and Mary gather at the tomb to grieve and honour Jesus.

There is a severe earthquake – much shaking and grinding of the earth. They see a miraculous vision – a being descends from the heavens, rolls away the stone sealing the gravesite, and sits on the stone.

The guards fall over in a dead faint.

The begin speaks: "Do not be afraid."

As we discussed on day 508 and earlier, "Do not fear" is one of the most common commands in the Bible, and here it is again.

But why not fear? Isn't fear an appropriate response in the midst of an earthquake, when you see a mysterious being come down and single-handedly roll away a massive rock? When trained soldiers, used to dangerous and life-threatening circumstances, fall over because of their fear? Isn't fear a very appropriate response?

Caution can be an appropriate response. Being careful and prudent can be appropriate responses. Taking every effort to ensure health and vitality are always appropriate and encouraged. But why are we told not to fear so much?

If we fear, it is because we are afraid of losing something. It could be fear of pain. It could be fear of a specific outcome. It could be fear of physical death, emotional death, spiritual death, relational death. Fear betrays that you feel something or someone has a power over you, the power to inflict harm. Fear would seem to be very appropriate – if you are being chased by a lion, fear will help you to run faster and think more sharply, so you can survive better – fear can be very useful!

I think the Angel is telling the Mary's, "There is nothing here you need fear. There is no danger here for you."

Fear, at its most basic, is often focussed on the temporal realities of a short life, not on the realities of an eternal life. In the bible we are told to only fear one thing: God Himself. Fear Him who is the ultimate arbiter over your eternal life – don't waste your energy fearing anything else. God is the only thing you should allow to have power over you, for it is only God who has ultimate power over you.

And that is the key. Do not focus on your short temporal life. Focus on your eternal life and live the temporal one as the blessing it is. Mary and Mary are being told that, despite everything they have endured and seen in these horrific few days, they are not to fear – and we need not fear either.

Write down what you are afraid of. Beside each item, write down why God would have you not fear that, or (if it is God) why God would agree you should fear it.

Share with those you trust.

Day 561: Raised from the dead

"I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there.' Listen, I have told you!" So they left the tomb quickly, with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

But Jesus met them, saying, "Greetings!" They came to him, held on to his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. They will see me there."

(Matthew 28:5-10).

This is an impossibility, and everyone knew it. Jesus had said He would rise from the dead, but once people were dead, they were dead.

Mary and Mary did not expect this. None of His disciples expected this. Frankly, they did not believe Jesus meant He would physically rise from the dead – surely it was another of His parables, or a metaphor, or just plain a mistake.

But the angel announces: "He is not here, for He has been raised. Go and tell His disciples!"

So they ran off, with understandable fear (despite being encouraged not to fear) and with even more understandable great joy (interesting how joy can co-exist with fear or other emotions. Joy is more a 'way of being' than an emotion in itself. Sadness can be the same – a way of being).

And then they meet Jesus Himself. Their joyful response is to worship Him, glorify Him. And Jesus repeats, "Do not be afraid."

This is not over.

This is definitely not over. The great sadness has become a great joy.

Jesus came, healing and proclaiming God's kingdom. He taught to not fear, to be brave, to love. The key to being truly Christian, a "little Christ", is to live in joy. Joy does not mean "happy-happy". Joy means that you have the certainty of being loved, that you know you are important in God's eyes, that your eternal future is more blessed and loving than you can imagine. Joy means you know that no matter what, Christ is alive and with you. Life can be hard at times, it has many challenges, there will be times of grief and times of happiness, but hold on to your joy in Christ. A joy that not even death can defeat.

Write down why you can be joyful.

Share with those you trust.

Day 562: Another lie

While they were going, some of the guards went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After they had assembled with the elders and formed a plan, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole his body while we were asleep.' If this matter is heard before the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story is told among the Jews to this day. (Matthew 28:11-15).

People will always try to discredit Christ. People will always try to discredit you. Pay them no attention. Christ is alive, and with you.

When Christ touched the leper, He did not get leprosy but healed it. When Christ touched the man with dropsy, He did not get dropsy but healed it. When Christ touched the woman who was bleeding, He did not start bleeding but healed it. When Christ talked to the tax collector, to the rejected sinners, to the prostitutes, He did not become a tax collector or a sinner or a prostitute, but healed them.

When Christ touched death, He healed it. Death was unable to end His existence – rather, it is through His death that we live.

So, pay no attention to those who would deny Christ and His salvation. Christ has healed you. Christ has defeated death. Let those who would deny this be. Walk with Him, rejoicing in His presence, and worship Him in life. Through His death, You have eternal life. Praise the Lord.

Every day when you wake up, remind yourself, "I have eternal life." Give a silent prayer of thanks to Christ. Through His death and resurrection, He achieved His ultimate aim. Capture what thoughts you may have on this:

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 563: Uncertainty

So the 11 disciples went to Galilee to the mountain Jesus had designated. When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted.

(Matthew 28:16-17).

After everything they had been through together, culminating in the mind-blowing events of this past week, the inner circle meet with Jesus – and some doubted. They were still unsure. How could this be? Was this really, truly, HIM? Are we hallucinating? Are we somehow being fooled, or fooling ourselves?

I know I have many doubts and confusions.

It is okay to be committed and yet uncertain. Jesus' disciples were emotionally and physically exhausted – and at the present time, a resurrected Jesus was beyond what some were able to comprehend or cope with. This did not mean that they didn't believe Him, or that they wouldn't follow Him. All except John ended up dying for Him, and John was banished to live out His remaining days on a remote island.

We can commit ourselves to a path of life, a path of health, a path of healing; the path of Jesus, even if we do not have all the answers, even if much of what we believe is a mystery and we frankly do not understand a lot of the details that we would like to.

Jesus said, **"The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will cause you to remember everything I said to you."** (John 14:26)

We live with a God who delights not to give us the answers up front, but rather to walk with us as we discover and explore and discern. A God who sometimes gives answers, but more often provides deeper questions, more challenging insights, more piercing circumstances. A God who teaches through the experiences of our lives. A God who doesn't care that we 'pass the test', but very deeply cares if we walk with Him in love.

We are told to love God with everything we are, and to love others as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40). Are you ready to do that? It requires bravery, and trust, and always seeking what is healthiest. It can be hard, it can be lonely, it can have many obstructions and impediments – but it is the Way of Life.

Describe the Way of Jesus in your own words. Describe how you can love God with all your being, and love others as you love yourself.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 564: Authority

Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18).

Authority is, in essence, the power to do something. We often grant authority to certain positions – to judges, or police, or politicians, or Prime Ministers.

Jesus is now saying that He has all authority. He has the power to do something on earth, in the first heaven, the second heaven, or the third heaven.

Interesting though, how He uses His authority!

What do you mean?

He doesn't make the Romans stop crucifying people. He doesn't stop wars or earthquakes or famines or other disasters. He doesn't force humanity into shalom. And, He doesn't answer all our questions as to why He allows bad things to happen, either!

How does He use His authority then? Does He do anything?

Let's look at that tomorrow 😊.

If you had all authority on earth and in the heavens, how would you use it? Do you see any downfalls to using your authority in how you first envision it?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 565: Use of Authority

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:19-20).

I have all authority!

Great! Let's usher in the kingdom of God. We'll rule at your right hand, and tell everyone else how to live. Have all the nations bring all their wealth in loving tribute to You, through us. It will be wonderful!

No.

What do you mean, "no"? We'll make sure everything is fair and that Your vengeance is given to the evil. We'll separate the goats from the sheep, and the sheep will be justly rewarded!

No.

What do you mean, 'NO'? Then what? What do you want?

I want you to teach. I want you to teach everyone you meet. Teach them how to love the Father and love each other. Teach them how to heal. Teach them all I have taught you, and all that the Holy Spirit further tells you. Teach them to be brave, to trust Me, to love in my name.

Teach?

Teach. And that's not all! I want you to teach them with the aim that you are making them into fellow-disciples. Transforming them into people who pattern their lives after mine, as you have tried to do these past three years. To live into everything that I have commanded you to live into.

Make them like us?

Fellow disciples. And that's not all! I want you to baptize them. Formally accept their transformation from living lives focused on the ways of the world, to living lives focussed on eternal life and the will of my Father. Baptize them through the Holy Spirit, into My Way. Baptize them through Me, into the Father. Through the Holy Spirit, unite them with Me. Through Me, unite them with the Father. Have all be one.

Baptize them?

Teach. Disciple them. Baptize them. My kingdom will spread like yeast spreads in the dough, like a virus spreads through the body. Cell by cell, person by person. Love them.

We can't do that!

Why not?

It's too much work! It will take forever! We're all alone! They're all against us! I can't do this!

Remember that I am with you always, to the end of the age. And I; I have all authority.

Jesus asks us to teach people to love the Father and love each other. Teach people how to heal. Be brave, trust God, and love in Christ's name.

Jesus asks us to teach people to imitate His life and ways.

Jesus asks us to baptize those you gather, like a harvest from seed or fish from the net.

That all may be one, in Him.

He is with you, He and His authority.

Teach, Imitate, Baptize. Be brave, trust, love. Using everything you've learned in this course so far, share how you can begin, despite any confusions and misgivings you may have. God has created you as a unique image of Him – your approach may be different than other people's approaches.

Oh boy...

Share as you feel appropriate.

Day 566: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom. Love. Pursue what is healthiest. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God. Be brave, trust God, Love.