

## Sunday School Lesson for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays, April 2023

# **Witnessing The Resurrection!**

**(Matthew 28:9-10)**

**Sunday, April 2, 2023**

The secret of Christian stability is the Resurrection! In fact, the symbol of Christianity is more an empty tomb than a cross. The empty tomb gives meaning to the cross. Were it not for the empty tomb, the cross would have been a tragedy.

It was only right that the witness of Jesus' Crucifixion and burial were also witnesses of His Resurrection. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were the first to receive news of the risen Lord and to encounter Him. They were at the cross; they were there when He was laid in the tomb; and now they received love's reward – they were the first to know the joy of the Resurrection. Part of the crowd at the cross was also at the empty tomb as witnesses of the Resurrection. And so, do we witness the Resurrection, the return to life; the defeat of death?

### **I. Witnessing the Resurrection affirms the Reality of the Resurrection!**

Our Christian faith is built on the reality of the Resurrection. It does not, alone, prove the deity of Christ, but it is consistent with it. Because Jesus is Lord, we can believe that He is the Resurrected Lord.

Was the Resurrection real? Many scholars say that it is the best-attested fact in history. Yet there are those who try to explain away the Resurrection by saying that the women went to the wrong tomb; or that Jesus fainted and later revived; or that thieves stole His body; or the disciples removed His body; or the Roman or Jewish Authorities took His body into their own custody.

But the tomb is empty! Jesus was Resurrected and set loose in the world. There is nothing that can stop this truth!

## **II. Witnessing the Resurrection gives witness to the Resurrection!**

Knowing that the Resurrection is real, what are we to do? – Tell Others! Notice, the Angel told the women to “go quickly, and tell...” (28:7). The first declaration of the Resurrection was a call to action. “Go, quickly, tell.” This is the kind of news that you do not keep to yourself. The Resurrection is that kind of news...

- News that gives courage: “fear not!”
- News that gives assurance: “He is not here!”
- News that gives joy: “with great joy!”

This is that kind of News that gives Life!!!

**Sunday, April 9, 2023**

## **III. Witnessing the Resurrection reminds us of the greatest witness: Changed Lives!**

Carefully note the change in the men who followed Jesus at the close of the Gospels and the opening of the book of Acts. Notice particularly Peter and James.

Peter had denied the Lord three times. He had cursed and sworn as though he had never known the restraining influence of Jesus. He had gone out and wept bitterly; joined the other disciples behind closed doors after Jesus died, but then turn over about two pages in your bible, and you will see that he is standing outside that same upper room of the Last Supper preaching Christ boldly. He defied the same Sanhedrin that had condemned Jesus to death. And he slept in his jail cell the night before he was to be executed. What changed Peter? The power of the Resurrected Christ.

James later assumed a position of leadership in the Jerusalem Church. But in Jesus’ lifetime, he did not believe in him. After the Resurrection, this earthly brother of the Lord was transformed from a doubter into a believer, just as Simon Peter was turned from fear to courage. Lives are changed by the Resurrected Lord. The greatest assurance of the Resurrection in our lives is when we meet the Resurrected Christ and He changes us. After our change, He charges us and gives us a job to do and power to do it. We are witnesses of the Resurrection as we experience His power and presence in our lives.

## Sunday School Lesson for the last 3 Sundays in April, 2023

# **You Can Conquer Disappointment!**

**(Job 2:9-10)**

**Sunday, April 16, 2023**

How should you react when disappointment comes crashing into your life? We find the answer in Job's experience. One of the most profound statements in all the Bible was made by Job when he asked, "shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:10 NIV)

Job, you are right! It is not fair to take the good of life for granted and then complain about the bad. This statement is Job's reply to his wife's suggestion about how he should respond to his troubles. Job was a good man and did not deserve what was happening to him. If anyone knew that, it was his wife. This was more than she could take, so she suggested that Job "curse God and die."

Job knew that all sunshine and no rain makes a desert and that we cannot have mountain tops without valley lows. Job accepted the good in life with a grateful spirit, and now, he would have to endure the bad in life with a gracious spirit. He would take his losses with quietness and courage and not grow bitter. In his response, Job teaches us that we can conquer disappointment.

We can choose to be like clay and respond to the heat of life by letting it harden us and make us bitter, or we can choose to be like wax by letting the heat of life melt and shape us into new patterns.

### **I. The Options Before Us!**

A. A Clay Response. "Then said his wife unto him, dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). We have all seen people make the clay response and allow harsh misfortunes turn them to bitterness. I have seen first hand how the clay response can corrode a human spirit.

As a young Pastor, I was greatly troubled by the response of a church member who was diagnosed as having incurable cancer. After a lengthy hospital visit, I asked if I might pray for her. Her response was, "You can pray, but it won't

do any good.” She was choosing to make the clay response, because cancer was not only destroying her body, but it was destroying her faith.

If we choose, we to can make the clay response, winding up as bitter and hard as Job’s wife.

B. The Wax Response. I have also met people of Job’s heroic spirit who simply refuse to be overcome by things that happen to them. Listen as Job speaks, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latterday upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh, I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26). In today’s language, we would say, “when life hands you a lemon – make lemonade.”

Scripture is filled with examples of such positive responses to negative experiences.

**Sunday, April 23, 2023**

## **II. Examples that Challenge us!**

David was a lemonade maker. He wrote, “I will bless the Lord at all times” (Ps. 34:1). He had every reason to complain and become bitter. King Saul sought to kill him; his son Amnon committed adultery with his sister; his son Absalom betrayed him; and his son Adonijah tried to grab the throne just before David died.

Jesus was another lemonade maker. He was no stranger to hardship and disappointment. Again, and again what he hoped for and worked hard to achieve was shattered in failure, but He never allowed these experiences to embitter him or drive him to despair. When He finally died, it was not with failure on his lips, but with a victorious shout – IT IS FINISHED!

Paul’s prison epistles also challenge us! Paul must have been frustrated by his frequent imprisonments. How easy it would have been for him to become bitter and hardened, but never once did he mention the deplorable living conditions or the inhumane treatment of the jail guards. Rather, he talked about how God was using his experiences to inspire others and advance the gospel.

Some Christians have learned not to become disappointed because of their troubles or to waste them, but to turn every stumbling block into a stepping stone. We can do the same – if we choose to!

**Sunday, April 30, 2023**

### **III. The Secret that frees us!**

The question could be asked, “How were all these people able to respond so creatively to hardships and disappointments? What is the secret that enables some people to pick up the pieces and start over, rather than going to pieces under the impact of some tragedy?”

The secret lies in how we visualize God’s relation to our lives. Job’s wife had a faulty view of God. She probably had been spoiled by the good life and had come to feel that God owed her a trouble-free existence, but when the good life turned bad, she felt that God was acting unjustly. Job had a different view of God! Job 42:5, Job says, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.” Job saw God as He is and not as one might want Him to be. God does not promise us a life of ease! God owes us nothing! He is not the blame for every trial that comes our way. The Scriptures teach us that because of God’s presence, whatever happens to us will not be too much for us.

Someone rightly said that the essence of despair is relegating God to the past. We need to believe that God is still at work in the world and in our lives today. His sovereign purpose will ultimately be fulfilled. Not everything that happens to us originates with God. Some events come straight from God, but others come from Satan or as results from our own wrong decisions and are God allowed. God saves us through our difficulties and not from our difficulties!

Some possibilities of good, will be present in these troubles because of the presence of God and in the most practical way, this is how we can overcome and conquer disappointments rather than succumb to it.