

# EMPTY PROMISE

TODAY, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE REMEMBERING THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. THIS YEARLY TRADITION DOES NOT ORIGINATE AMONG THE APOSTLES AND 1ST-CENTURY CHURCH. THERE IS NO BIBLICAL COMMAND OR OBLIGATION TO DO SO. AT NORTH COLLIN, WE CELEBRATE JESUS' DEATH AND RETURN EVERY WEEK. HE RETURNS BECAUSE HE LIVES. HE LIVES BECAUSE HE WAS RESURRECTED. HAVING SAID THAT, I APPRECIATE THAT WE MAY HAVE VISITORS AMONG US WHO EXPECT TO HEAR ABOUT HIS RESURRECTION. I WANT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT, AND IN THE WORST CASE, IT NEVER HURTS THE CHURCH TO REMEMBER THE POWER BEHIND HIS RESURRECTION.

THIS WEEK, I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WOMEN APPROACHING JESUS' TOMB THAT SUNDAY MORNING. WHAT WERE THEY EXPECTING? FROM THEIR REACTION, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THEY EXPECTED TO SEE A BODY. MARY'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE EMPTY TOMB WAS TO TELL THE APOSTLES "THEY" (PROBABLY HIS KILLERS) HAD TAKEN THE LORD'S BODY SOMEWHERE. QUESTION TO THE GARDENER WAS, "WHERE HAVE YOU TAKEN HIM?" NOT, "I KNEW IT! HE'S RISEN FROM THE DEAD!" ONCE PETER AND JOHN ENTERED THE TOMB, THEY BELIEVED. YET, THE TEXT IN JOHN 20 CLEARLY STATES THEY HADN'T UNDERSTOOD SCRIPTURE, WHICH SAID HE MUST RISE FROM THE DEAD.

WHAT A MOMENT. HAVE THERE BEEN TERRIFYING MOMENTS IN YOUR LIFE THAT WERE RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER THAT YOU ABSOLUTELY DREADED? MAYBE YOU'RE AWAITING AN ACCEPTANCE OR DENIAL LETTER FROM THE COLLEGE YOU APPLIED TO? PERHAPS SOMETHING HAPPENED AT WORK, AND YOU'RE AFRAID TO RETURN THE NEXT DAY ONLY TO BE FIRED? MAYBE A LOVED ONE MADE A HORRIBLE CHOICE IN SOME WAY AND IS ABOUT TO HEAR THE JUDGE'S VERDICT? PERHAPS A LOVED ONE'S HEALTH TAKES A TURN, AND YOU FEAR THE WORST? YOUR MARRIAGE IS IN A MESS, AND YOUR SPOUSE THREATENS DIVORCE, AND YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT THE NEXT DAY MAY BRING. MAYBE THERE'S BEEN SOME CONFLICT WITH FAMILY, AND IT COULD COME TO A HEAD THE FOLLOWING DAY? YOU GET THE IDEA. IN LIFE, THE REALITY IS THAT THOSE DAYS COME, AND YOUR NIGHTMARE BECOMES A REALITY. YOU'RE NOT GETTING INTO THE DESIRED COLLEGE, AND YOUR FUTURE LOOKS DIFFERENT. YOU LOSE THE JOB. YOU'RE GOING TO JAIL. YOUR LOVED ONE DIES. YOUR SPOUSE LEAVES YOU. YOUR CHILD DECIDES THEY'RE DONE WITH YOU.

BUT ON THAT DAY, AS THEY EXPECTED TO BEAR THE REMINDER OF YESTERDAY'S EVENTS BY LOOKING AT JESUS' BODY, THEY FOUND AN EMPTY TOMB. AND THOUGH THEY DIDN'T REALIZE IT AT THE MOMENT, THEY WERE ACTUALLY WITNESSING AN EMPTY PROMISE. I SAY IT THAT WAY BECAUSE IT'S PRECISELY WHAT IT WAS, AS JESUS SAID. HE MADE AN EMPTY PROMISE. THAT GRAVE WAS EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ON THE THIRD DAY—EMPTY.

YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT THAT AN EMPTY TOMB IS THE STRANGEST PLACE TO FIND THE MOST INCREDIBLE PROMISES. BUT IT'S AT THE CENTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: AN EMPTY TOMB. I'M REMINDING US TODAY OF SEVERAL TRUTHS TIED TO THAT PROMISE.

## **JOHN 2:18-22 (DESTROY THIS TEMPLE)**

- IT REMINDS US THAT WHAT HE SAYS, HE WILL DO. YOU CAN COUNT ON HIS WORDS. YES, THE BIBLE CAN BE TRUSTED. IT COMES FROM GOD. IT FULFILLED OT PASSAGES AS WELL. IT'S ALL TRUSTWORTHY.
- IT REMINDS US THAT HE KNOWS WHAT IT IS TO BE TORN DOWN.

## **JOHN 10:7-18 (PROTECTION FROM THE GOOD SHEPHERD)**

- IT REMINDS US THAT HE IS LOVE. ROMANS 8 COULDN'T BE ANY CLEARER.
- IT REMINDS US THAT HE DOESN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF US. HE WANTS TO GIVE US ALL AN ABUNDANT LIFE.

- IT REMINDS US THAT HE'S STILL GUIDING US EVEN THOUGH HE IS NOT PHYSICALLY PRESENT. YOU ARE NOT ABANDONED CHILDREN.

### JOHN 12:27-32 (RULER OF THIS WORLD IS JUDGED)

- IT REMINDS US THAT HE WON.
- I HAVE GROWN TO BELIEVE MORE AND MORE IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM. NOT THAT I UNDERSTAND IT ALL, BUT I KNOW A WAR TAKES PLACE. GROWING UP, YOU'D HAVE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU COMFORT. I KNEW MY DAD WOULD LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR ME. I KNEW MY BROTHERS WOULD EAGERLY DO SO AS WELL. BUT YOU BECOME A MAN WHO SACRIFICES. IN MY LIFE, I ESPECIALLY INVITE THE ROLE OF FIGHTING FOR MY WIFE AND CHILDREN. BUT I'VE GOT TO BE HONEST - THE CHILD-LIKE FAITH STILL NEEDS A HERO. I NEED TO KNOW HE'S FIGHTING FOR ME BECAUSE, WITHOUT HIM, I FAIL. I WOULD BE LYING IF I SAID I NEVER STRUGGLED WITH FEARS BEFORE. IT'S DURING THESE TIMES I REGROUP AND REMIND MYSELF THAT I DON'T HAVE TO FEAR DEATH ITSELF. JESUS HAS ETERNAL LIFE WAITING FOR ME. HE'S FOUGHT FOR ME, HIS LAST ENEMY TO DEFEAT WILL BE DEATH, BUT IT'S NOT IN THE AIR WHO WILL WIN.
- IT REMINDS US THAT HE HOLDS AUTHORITY. WHILE AUTHORITY SEEMS OUT OF STYLE TODAY, IT'S A SOURCE OF COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD. YES, THERE IS ONE WHO IS IN CONTROL AND JUST. WE DO NOT FEAR HIM. WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR HIM TO JUDGE.

### ROMANS 6:1-14 (BURIED & RAISED WITH CHRIST)

- IT REMINDS US TO LIVE FOR CHRIST. HE DESERVES OUR ALL.
- 2 COR. 5:17

### PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 (EMPTIED HIMSELF)

- IT REMINDS US TO LIVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. HIS EMPTY PROMISE CAME AT A SIGNIFICANT COST.

### ACTS 2:29-39 (FINAL MESSAGE)

- IT REMINDS YOU THAT THERE MAY BE SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T DEALT WITH YET. HAVE YOU COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE EMPTY GRAVE? IT MEANS A DEATH HAS OCCURRED. HIS RESURRECTION IS NOT WITHOUT MEANING.
- 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4, 12-21