

2008 3-23, Be transformed through the Resurrection Matt 28v1-10 (Easter)

That first Easter morning, when the women went to the tomb, it would have seemed like a dreary day. The women would have been ready for something good to happen. They would have been primed for a transformation to occur.

Like them, as we come to worship on Easter, we are in need of transformation. We want to hear good news. Everything in our lives is surrounded by sin and problems. How many of us here this morning need a resurrection in our lives? Maybe, just maybe, something different will happen on this Easter.

This being Easter our leadership met and decided, "You know, we want to get a really special speaker. Why don't we call the best preacher in the world and ask him to speak." And they did and he said "No". So they said, "Well if we can't have the best speaker, as least we can get the smartest one." So they called him and he said "No". And then they said, "Well, if we can't get the best or the smartest, at least we can get the best looking." And they called him and he said "No". And finally one of them said, "Well, we can always ask our preacher." And so they did. And what could I say, I'd already told them "no" three times.

But seriously, transformation doesn't come from the best of the best by human standards. Transformation comes by hearing the message. God's word transforms us and that is what changes things.

Jesus is the one and only way to the Father. He is the source of all transformation. He offers those who are spiritually dead the very way, truth, and life of God. Our victory

is in him and in him alone.

An old man lived alone in Idaho. He wanted to spade his potato garden, but it was backbreaking work, and his son, Bubba, who used to help him, was in prison.

The old man mentioned it in a letter he sent to his son by saying, "I'm not sure exactly what to do. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. It looks like I won't be able to plant that garden this year after all."

A few days later, he received a short letter from his son, "Dad, For heaven's sake, don't dig up that garden that's where I buried the bodies!"

At 4 a.m. the next morning, a crew of police officers, and the FBI arrived to find the bodies. After digging for hours, they gave up and apologized to the old man and left.

That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

"Dear Dad, under these circumstances, that's the best I can do, go ahead and plant your potatoes now."

Sometimes we are like the stubborn earth that stands in the way of experiencing a completely transformed life in Jesus Christ. Instead of being willing to trust, to take direction, and to accept the rewards Christ offers. We remain a potential garden...a potential garden in need of resurrection...a potential garden that needs to find the way, the truth, and the life...a potential garden just waiting to accept the victory that's found in Jesus Christ.

But the women at the tomb were open to the message of the resurrection. Jesus had worked the soil, so to speak, with Martha. (John 11:17-27) Before Lazarus's resurrection Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the life, He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never

die.” (v.25-26)

And finally the day came when the women themselves would believe in the resurrection of Jesus. They heard the first transforming message from the angel. Shocking as it was, they believed. They heard the good news about the resurrection for the first time. The women must have felt like new people. Now there was hope, now there was joy, now there was peace.

This transformation would have happened very quickly. They heard the Word and they believed. They were instant Resurrection believers. For us we have also undergone this first transformation.

It happens in different ways. Some of us were transformed when we were babies. You were given the Word in your baptism, when the water was splashed on you. Others were transformed through their parents, or through friends, as they shared God’s Word with you. And still others, as you read God’s word from the Bible, were transformed to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. In that instant, you were transformed into new people, God’s people.

And since then God has been in the process of transforming you. In this second transformation God is making you into a spiritual being. You participate in this transformation like you never have before. This transformation is a process. Not just the idea of going from bad to good to better to best. Faith in Christ is not just some self-help system to ‘move you into excellence’. Christ does want to transform you, however, from wherever you are (bad, good, better, best) to whom He wants you to become. Whoever you are and wherever you are, you are not ‘there’ yet, I am sure. The bible idea of TRANSFORMING is not simply improvement. God is at work, re-creating who you

are, re-programming how I think, re-defining what we value, why we do what we do. He is doing this so that we will be conformed to the image of His Son, the model and pattern.

This transformation can happen from the inside out or the outside in. Inside out is like reading scripture and acting on it to change our lives. Outside in are things that happen to us that force change, out of our control. (Ask people which type of transformation they would prefer by a show of hands.) Many changes happen outside in because generally we ignore God's prompting for us. We would rather not change if we have a choice.

Let me suggest that Christ is putting the same question to you that he did for a man who needed transformation in his life in the Bible, "Do you want to get well?" Think about it. Think about the one thing in yourself that you would most like to see changed. Not what you desire to see changed in your circumstance, or in some other person, but in yourself. And then ask yourself, do I really want freedom from this sin, this character flaw, this destructive pattern of behavior? Do I really want to grow in this area? Your first response might be to say, "Of course I do! Of course I want to change!" But do you, really? Because change is going to cost you something, and you need to count the cost before you begin the journey. You need to look into your heart and ask, "Why am I doing this? What's the benefit? What's the payoff?" And then, "What am I going to lose if I make this change? What is it I don't want to give up? What am I afraid of?" At minimum, change is going to cost you the security of having things stay the same. It may cost you some peace, in the short run. It may cost you some pride. But it will cost. Make sure you're willing to pay that cost. (Read Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the

pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your ind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is --- his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

Again, God's change is not just an improvement. Look at the movie transformers. When the cars and vehicles transformed, they didn't just get a wax and a polish. There was no oil change or even a new engine, it was a complete change of who they were, a complete transformation into a new being. God's transforming is giving us a new way functioning, a new way of looking at things.

It was 1818 in France, and Louis, a boy of 9, was sitting in his father's workshop. The father was a harness-maker and the boy loved to watch his father work the leather. "Someday Father," said Louis, "I want to be a harness-maker, just like you."

"Why not start now?" said the father. He took a piece of leather and drew a design on it.

"Now, my son," he said, "take the hole-puncher and a hammer and follow this design, but be careful that you don't hit your hand."

Excited, the boy began to work, but when he hit the hole-puncher, it flew out of his hand and pierced his eye! He lost the sight of that eye immediately. Later, sight in the other eye failed. Louis was now totally blind.

A few years later, Louis was sitting in the family garden when a friend handed him a pinecone. As he ran his sensitive fingers over the cone, an idea came to him. He became enthusiastic and began to create an alphabet of raised dots on paper so that the blind could feel and interpret what was written. Thus, Louis Braille opened up a whole new world for the blind—all because of an accident!

2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

With that in mind, you may bring forward the lilies to signify the garden that is growing inside of you. That potential garden God has planted in our hearts.

(Sing change my heart Oh God, make it ever true)

The final transformation from God is the most powerful. It is when we finally see Jesus. For the women they were able to see Jesus shortly after he rose from the dead. That moment would have been a life changing experience. They saw Jesus, the one who was transformed for us.

His resurrection meant a transformation for eternity. We will be brought into the very presence of Jesus in heaven. He is the one who makes us and shapes us into his perfect children, his forgiven children, his masterpiece.

And here today, at the high point of the service we will receive the presence of Christ in bread and wine, that is body and blood. This life giving gift transforms us into God’s people.

But we still may doubt whether we will be different when we leave this church today. We may not realize what transformation will take place right now. Yet along the way God helps us to see the difference the resurrection makes.

A Christian man and his wife lost their young SON in a TRAGIC ACCIDENT on Good Friday in 1996. The boy’s funeral was on Easter Sunday. During the MEMORIAL service the father got up and shared with his family and friends that Easter had taken on a new importance. "Until you stare death eye-to-eye," he began sobbing, "Easter is just a

word. It's a nice day with bunny rabbits and eggs . . . .but when someone so precious to you dies, Easter becomes everything . . . an anchor in a fierce storm . . . a rock on which to stand . . . a hope that raises you above despair and keeps you going."