

Here's What You Do Next...

Sometimes people do things that are downright bizarre!

Once I read about a Funeral Home in Ohio that came up with an idea that takes
“resting in peace” to a new level.

Instead of the place where the casket would usually be placed,
they'd created a bedroom-like setting. They had a bed with two side tables.

The owner said he'd noticed how awkward mourners are around the casket-
and he just decided to try to make them more comfortable.

He reported that people took chairs and were sitting around the bed.

“It was just amazing, he said.”

And a woman who had experienced one of these ‘reposing bed’ events said

“It was just lovely. It's just like walking into their bedroom- That's the way I want to go.”

Well, maybe so- I've heard of real eccentrics being buried in their favorite cars-
but one wonders what might come next- a room with a recliner
and a TV tuned to ESPN?

It may sound ‘lovely’ to some people- but- isn't it, in reality-
another form of our western denial of death itself?

In Luke's account of Jesus' post resurrection appearance
the disciples had a different sort of problem-

They knew he had died all right- and some of them already knew he had risen from the dead-
but when they actually saw him- when he actually showed up in their midst-

their minds did what ours probably would have done—they didn't think he was real-
they thought he was a ghost!

(I doubt they'd ever seen a ghost- but it was the most logical explanation they could think of.))

Jesus understood their problem- he didn't rebuke them-

he just said "Here- look at my hands and my feet- Touch me- "-

They were overjoyed- but they still couldn't believe it completely-

and I wouldn't be too hard on them- after all-they knew beyond any doubt that he was dead-

But who'd ever seen anybody who'd risen from the dead-

To help them get over their shock- he ate some fish- he was real! – and they were convinced!

He ate like a real human being- just like they did and just like we do.

One of our problems, I think, is that it's hard for us to believe

that Jesus was ever a real human being like us-

We're much better at putting him on some sort of other-worldly super-spiritual pedestal-

We can believe that- but like us?? That's hard for us.

We tend to think that what we need to do is to "be like Jesus- - or what we think Jesus was like-

and so we try to improve ourselves- to be "better and better in every way."

We want to be less human and more like God.

David Lose says "When we study scripture- especially the New Testament,

the story told is not one of humanity's journey of improvement and spiritual enlightenment

but rather it's actually the eternal and holy God that embarks on a trek... to be like us

and encounter us where we are.

From his birth from a human mother, his grief over losing a friend,

his experience of joy and disappointment with his disciples,

to his experience of isolation at Gethsemane and despair on the cross;

the picture of Christ's life, ministry and death is one of God's embracing all that we are

so we would know God understands us as we are,

embraces and accepts us as we are and redeems us as we are.

So also in the story of the resurrection,

God comes for real people, redeems real people,
and promises to resurrect real- and also physical – -people.”¹

Jesus explained the scriptures to the disciples-

we know they hadn’t understood before that he had to die and rise on the third day.

It’s an exciting story- for the first time in history- someone’s risen from the dead!

The disciples are convinced now! It was true!

The Gospel writers are convinced- they want us to be convinced-

But- the logical question is- “why”-

Is it simply to show us what we have to look forward to?

That’s part of it- when we die- death isn’t the end- Jesus has overcome death-

we will, too! We don’t have to pretend we’re “just asleep” in a funeral home bed room.

But notice that Jesus doesn’t stop with the assurance of resurrection-

He gives some orders to be followed!

He didn’t mean those orders just for his first century disciples! He meant them for all time:

Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in Jesus’ Name to all nations-

beginning from Jerusalem!

That’s the part that’s meant for us!

He told the disciples to wait till they were given power- that was the Holy Spirit-

and then they were to go out and preach-

They did- and they turned the world upside down.

We’ve heard the message- We know that we are called to repent- to turn, change our sinful ways-

We know we’ve received the Holy Spirit in Baptism

And so we’re called to carry the same message to our world.

¹ David Lose. *In the Meantime*, April 12, 2021.

Jesus has died! We will too!

Jesus has risen! We will have everlasting life, too!

Jesus said to tell people they could be free of their sin!

We have heard it! We can do it!

We can repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness.

We're called to tell that to people!...a

nd while we're at it, to show them by the way we forgive!

Who have you told that to?

Who have you shown that to?

Who have you forgiven?

Amen.