

Not Sticking Around Here by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. x1050327
Acts 10:34-43 and Matthew 28:1-10
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One Good Friday, as Sue and I were traveling on the Ohio Turnpike near the Port Clinton exit, I saw a semi-trailer with the word “GOD” painted on the side. That was shockingly strange sight. Was God inside that trailer? I always believed God was too great to be contained in such a small space. I had all kinds of feelings about the arrogance of calling a trailer or a truck line “GOD.”

As we got closer, I could see that it was really “G. O. D.” The small print said, “Guaranteed Overnight Delivery.” Still, it was quite a shock to see. Then, I began to get an Easter message: after all, it was Good Friday. That is what Easter is: “Guaranteed Overnight Delivery!” Jesus was delivered from the tomb overnight.

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb early in the morning, it was empty. The tomb was too small to contain Jesus. Jesus was too full of life to be kept dead.

Furthermore, through the gift of Jesus Christ, God guarantees us overnight delivery from death and from the things that would bind us in slavery.

According to Matthew, The Easter story is a story of opposites: a story of life amid the death; a story of “come” and “go;” a story of a stone rejected but then accepted as the chief cornerstone; a story of fear and joy. Easter is a resurrection set in the midst of burial. It is victory in the face of what looked like defeat.

Jesus said, in effect, that he was not sticking around here, around the tombs, around the smell of death. He had work to do. He wasn’t sticking around Jerusalem and Judea. He was heading North to Galilee. Twice, the two Marys got the message that Jesus was going on to Galilee where there was work to be done. First, it was the angel who told them.¹ Then, they met Jesus on the road and he himself told them that he was going on ahead of the other disciples to Galilee.² What was so important about Galilee? It was where Jesus had spent most of his ministry: It was where people believed in his acts of kindness and his teachings. It was peaceful and quiet, far away from the hubbub of the markets and jammed streets of Jerusalem. For Matthew it was “Galilee of the Gentiles”³ This is where the great commission should take place.

Let’s look at the opposites of the Easter story: For fear of [the angel], the guards shook and became like dead men.⁴ The guards were like dead and Jesus was alive! The Roman soldiers with their might, with their spears and shields of war, were like dead men in the face of the defenseless women and a crucified Jesus. The one who was supposed to be dead, was the one who was really alive!

As we react to the headlines of death, we must remember the good news of life. Soldiers, Iraqi citizens, police, and suicide terrorists are dying, when Jesus says, “blessed are the peacemakers.”⁵ A lonely Jeff Weise kills nine and then himself in Red Lake, Minnesota, and Jesus says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”⁶ Religious conservatives and right-to-lifers politicize the sensitive Terry Schiavo case that should be settled by family members and medical

¹Matthew 28:7

²Matthew 28:10

³Matthew 4:15

⁴Matthew 28:4

⁵Matthew 5:9

⁶Matthew 5:48

staff in dignified privacy and Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”⁷

The Easter story is a story of “come and go.” “Come, see the place where he lay.”⁸ the angel says. Come, if you don’t believe me, see the proof: see the empty tomb. And the women went into the tomb. “Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead’”⁹ The two Marys were told to be the first preachers, the first evangelists: “tell the good news about Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.” A tomb cannot hold our Lord. Jesus cannot be stopped, even by death. The message of freedom and new life cannot be stopped by those who think that women are not as capable as men of being preachers, or deacons, or President.

Easter is story of a stone rejected but then accepted as the chief cornerstone. Jesus was rejected by the established religious and political leadership: thrown away like an old stone. Yet, he was accepted by those who believed, and became the cornerstone, the stone that holds the faith together. Christianity— true Christianity, the Christianity of turning the other cheek, of not judging others, and of humble service— is rejected by the established religious, political, and media leadership today. Today, we hear about the mega church, the successfully marketed church, the slick and prosperous church. But the cornerstone of Christianity is quiet loving, caring, and serving. Christianity is not the exclusive heaven-bound club that some people preach. As Peter said, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”¹⁰

Easter is a story of fear and joy. It is fearful to go into a tomb—to look death squarely in the face. Yet, when the women did so, and saw the tomb empty, they were joyous: they knew that what Jesus had said before was true. He could not be held down by death. He couldn’t be contained by a tomb or a semi- trailer.

We, like the women, must come and go. Come to church and be nurtured, come and look and see that there is no death here. Come and see that Christ is risen from the dead, and then, go and minister. Minister not to Jerusalem, or Judea, but to Galilee: not to the church, but to the non-church: the people who say they believe in God, but have no church home, no brothers or sisters of the faith to lean upon during the time of sorrow of death or joy of birth.

We must be able to live with the opposites of life. Faith in Jesus Christ will enable us to do that. Can we at Elon Community Church live with the opposites of life? Do we have spiritual life here? Are you in close spiritual connection with God? Do you do devotions, consisting of Bible study and prayer every day? Are you alive with the spirit of God? Are you eager to show your faith by standing up against racism or by helping construct a Habitat for Humanity home, or by volunteering at a hospital, or by listening to the trials of another person? Or are you content to simply sit in a pew in church once in a while to get a good feeling? Today you have the opportunity of making a choice: the choice of staying among the tombs of fear and phoniness, or of following Jesus to where the action is in this world. Be alive in the faith. Believe that God can fill you with spirit so you can do wonderful things for God and your fellow humans. Prove to the world that we love one another and care for one another. By your life, show the world that Jesus Christ lives.

⁷Matthew 11:28

⁸Matthew 28:6

⁹Matthew 28:7

¹⁰Acts 10:34-35