

EASTER: A TIME TO REJOICE

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Easter Day

April 24, 2011

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 28:1-10 or John 20:1-18

Go and Tell

Alleluia! He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

With these words, many will greet one another in Christ on Easter Day! And for many, this expression of praise gets “resurrected” on Easter Day in celebration of the risen Christ. A practice in my congregation is to discontinue use of the word “Alleluia” throughout Lent, in keeping with the penitential mood of the season. We even hide the word – children write the word in bold letters on sheets of construction paper, which get rolled and tied with ribbon or string, and then hidden until they are found on Easter Day. And then “Alleluias” burst forth – in hymns, songs of praise, liturgical responses, expressions of greeting – as we proclaim that Christ is risen indeed!

In the Gospel text from Matthew, we learn that on that first Easter morning Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had come “to see the tomb” (28:1). Unlike the resurrection accounts according to Mark (16:1) and Luke (24:1), the women in Matthew’s Gospel do not come with spices to anoint Jesus’ body. What was it they had come to see? Two days earlier, they had witnessed Jesus’ death and burial and sat across from the tomb as the stone was rolled against the tomb’s entrance (27:55-61). Did they return in order to continue their vigil which had been interrupted by the Sabbath observance?

According to Matthew’s Gospel, what they saw and what they experienced was truly awesome! The stone had not yet been rolled away; but as they journeyed to the tomb, there was a violent earthquake, and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled away the stone (28:2). Did they see the angel coming down from heaven? What must they have thought and felt? Did they remember Jesus’ words about his being raised to life on the third day (16:21; 20:19)?

These two Marys are the first to see the empty tomb, the first to hear the joyous news that Jesus has been raised to life, and the first to encounter the risen Lord! The angel’s message is succinct and direct (28:6,7); the women are told to come and see, to hurry, to tell, and finally, to go! They leave, frightened and happy; then comes that wonderful encounter! They see Jesus—their risen Savior! Jesus greets them and gives them further instructions to tell the disciples where they, too, will see him!

The message to go and tell is just as urgent for us today as it was 2,000 years ago. We are twenty-first century witnesses, and we, too, see Jesus through our eyes of faith. The angel told the women to “go and tell;” Jesus also told them to “go and tell;” and, in Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples, they were told to “go to the people of all nations” (28:19a) to make disciples, baptize, and teach.

To preach the gospel and to testify so that “all who have faith in Jesus will have their sins forgiven in his name” (Acts 10:43, *CEV*) is at the heart of the apostle Peter’s message and is now the Good News we are called to proclaim. Like those first witnesses on that very first Easter, we, too, are missionaries of the resurrection message. Go and tell!

Alleluia! He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who served on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship and continues as a consultant to ABS.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Suriname – with thanks to God for 45 years of Bible work in Suriname to be commemorated on May 3, for the opening of Bible Society regional distribution and promotion offices in Suriname and Guyana, and for the Revised New Testament in the indigenous Patamuna language spoken in Guyana; and with prayers for Bible translation work in Sranan Tongo, Surinamese, Javanese, and Arowak, and for the work in French Guiana; **Brazil** – with thanks to God for progress in Scripture distribution in Brazil; and with prayers for wisdom to face the challenges and meet the different demands of a country with lots of social contrasts, and needs the Word of God; also pray for growth in the area of fundraising so that the Holy Bible can be offered to those in need, through outreach programs; **Ecuador** – with thanks to God for Bible work in this region; and with prayers for unity among the people of Ecuador – its leaders, pastors, priests and the laity – and that they may work together for the increase of God’s Kingdom; also pray that God’s Word may take on life in every individual, bringing personal, fundamental transformation, and that it may bring change to the church and the nation; **Peru** – with thanks to God for *Pan de Vida* which allowed the provision of breakfasts and Scriptures to child survivors of last year’s floods, for the impact of literacy projects for the Quechua, for the campaign for the prevention of domestic violence, and for the national Read the Bible campaign; and with prayers that God will continue to bless their work as they continue to help Peru’s neediest people.

Activity Corner: “Go and Tell” Good News Posters

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2” x 11” construction paper or poster board (assorted colors); markers; glue (squeeze bottle); glitter.

On sheets of construction paper or poster board, write the words “Alleluia” and “He is risen” (on 2 separate sheets) in large bold letters. Outline the letters in glue and then sprinkle them with glitter. Throughout the 50-day Easter season, display these posters where you gather for devotions or in your place of worship as reminders to “tell the good news” and to greet those you meet with the words: “Alleluia! He is risen!” Read Colossians 3:1-4 as a closing prayer and conclude by singing one of your favorite Easter hymns or praise songs.