

This Changes Everything!
The Miracle of Jesus' Resurrection
Luke 24:13-35; Psalm 73
Troy Taylor

I remember coming into a staff meeting while I worked with IVCF many years ago. Everyone was gathered around the TV, with a live news broadcast playing. My supervisor looked at me gravely, and said, "This changes everything. The world will never go back from this event."

That was 9-11. And he was right.

The miracles that we've been talking about all summer are like that, but on a smaller scale. For the healed paralytic, the lepers, the bleeding woman, the miracle that touches their lives changes absolutely everything about them.

Then there is the miracle of all miracles. One so profound, so immense, that it shifts every other thing in human history in relationship to it.

The resurrection.

This, I think, is where we join the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Only a week ago, the future had looked rather promising. Jesus was alive and well, healing people, clashing with the Pharisees and the Romans, and making grand statements about the Kingdom of God coming. These were all familiar stories to the disciples, who had grown up on stories of God, the prophets, and the final setting to rights that the Kingdom of God would bring about for the oppressed people of God.

But then the story took a hard twist, and Jesus allowed himself to be taken away from them. He was beaten, whipped, mocked, and then, finally, crucified. A dead messiah would not work. The glorious raising up, resurrection of the kingdom of God through Israel bled out on a

cross, and was sealed in the earth. Not a good beginning to a revolution.

Part of the problem was that the disciples were perhaps blinded by their expectations of what a good future held. In their eyes, it was probably military, likely bloody, definitely political. The good future meant that Israel would once again become the dominant, global power that they were under King David. Only more so! Nations would look at them, and learn what it meant to follow the Torah and the Talmud, to worship in Jerusalem at the glorious temple where God had placed his name, and where he had his throne.

Their idea of the good life that Messiah was to bring in didn't look anything like a crucifixion, hiding in closed and locked rooms, and the power of the Roman occupation unbroken.

But that is exactly how the good life looks from God's perspective! It's completely counter-intuitive.

The realization that Jesus was walking with them, teaching them, revealing God to them, on the road between Jerusalem and somewhere, changed their whole world. They were changed enough that they immediately went back out on the road, accepting the risks and dangers of night travel, to return to Jerusalem, with the word of their experience.

Jesus is alive, not dead.

The resurrection is an historical fact.

And it changes everything.

Paul thinks so too. If Jesus has not indeed raised from the dead, then we are to be pitied above all others. And this is not just because we are naively following a myth or a legend, and are therefore mentally weak

or foolish. Rather, it is because the whole worldview of Christianity doesn't make sense.

But. . .

If the resurrection is true, then Paul also is able to say that

“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8).

Why would we do the things we do if not for the resurrection?

Why give away our hard earned money in our tithe?

Why insist on faithfulness and fidelity in our marriages, families, and friendships?

Why concern ourselves with the poor, and the enslaved?

Why deny ourselves pleasure, wealth, and power over others?

I want us to turn to the Psalms to begin a prayerful reflection on this exact question. In it, the Psalmist asks these very questions. Read with me.

Psalm 73:1-12

¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.

² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.

³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

- ⁴ They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
- ⁵ They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
- ⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.
- ⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
- ⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.
- ¹⁰ Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.
- ¹¹ They say, "How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?"
- ¹² This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.

Kind of looks like today!

It certainly looks like the secular world has all of the advantages, and the good life, doesn't it? The systems we have made serve the wealthy, the powerful, the aggressive, competitive, the individual. We reward greed and ambition with wealth and power. We value spinning the narrative and collusion.

I've always loved this Calvin and Hobbes Cartoon, because I can totally relate. It speaks to my inner child! But, it is also a little disturbing, wouldn't you say? Because it says something about my definition of the good life!



Physical security: we want to not only be safe from physical harm and war, but we also want to be taken care of when we are sick. We want police to protect us from others who would do us violence or harm. We want doctors and hospitals to cure us of our ailments. We want an army to secure our borders, and keep our country from being overrun. Power, we are told, is part of the good life.

Social security: We want to have companionship along the way of life. We want our kids to have access to good schools, and eventually to higher education, so that they, too, can have better jobs and higher salaries. We want safe, suburban communities, where we know our neighbours, but don't have to interact with them much, where people like us can afford to live, but others are kept at arm's length. Friends of the right kind, we are told, are part of the good life.

Economic security: we want enough money to be able to feed, clothe, and shelter our family. But that isn't quite enough anymore. We also want enough to take a vacation every year, to explore the world, to have a few hobbies, decent transportation, and a healthy cushion in case something goes wrong. We also want to be able to make enough in our working years to be able to live for years, even decades, without earning more. Wealth, we are told, is part of the good life.

This, according to the culture around us, is the good life, the goal that is worthy of our time, effort, and energy. Everything is to be poured into

this, and when we finally arrive, we will know that we've made it. This is the good life.

Even worse, it works! We have set things up so that many of us can have the good life that we are promised in the advertisements of the Financial Post – Freedom 55, a new car or three in the garage, surrounded by a brood of well-behaved grandkids while we take our ease after a long, successful career and careful financial planning. Winning, though, means there are also losers. And this is deeply ingrained in our concept of the good life.

It certainly looks like the people who prioritize economic, physical and social security are winning.

Psalm 73:13-17

¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴ All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.

¹⁵ If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.

¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply

¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.

I will admit, there have been times in my life where I echoed the thoughts of verses 13 and 14. What is the point of self-discipline, of righteousness, of generosity and forgiveness, if it is greed and

competition, taking advantage, and doing what feels good, that win in the end?

That's a funny phrase though. The end. Because if there is no resurrection, then the end is death. And if the end is death, then everything is ultimately futile, unless I can ensure some kind of legacy security for my own genetic offspring. That, my friends, is deeply troubling.

Until we enter into the sanctuary of God, and we worship him. Then, we gain a whole different perspective.

Psalm 73:18-20

¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.

¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!

²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes;
when you arise, Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.

In the end, it is not the resurrection of Jesus and the rule of God that are revealed as fantasies, but the values and priorities, the definition of the good life that we pursue without God, that are fantasies!

As it turns out, shockingly, how people define the good life doesn't have much in common with how God defines the good life. In fact, those very values end in death and hell. Not good!

We find ourselves in the same place as the disciples walking with Jesus along the dusty road, having our ideas and priorities of the good life given a deep reality check. Or, in this case, a resurrection check.

One of the key purposes of peaching, I am coming to realize, is to highlight the contrast between a biblical way of living and the culture that surrounds us. I want us to be uncomfortable with the good life that Canadian culture defines, and point us to a better idea, or definition of the good life. And the resurrection of Jesus is what makes this discomfort, this re-visioning, necessary. Because the resurrection changes how the story ends. It does not end with death. It ends, instead, with life!

No longer is success determined by the state of my finances, friend list, and family state immediately before my death. It is no longer determined by the list of experiences and assets I've managed to accumulate over my lifetime.

It is, rather, determined by what will last through the very real, and very literal, return of Jesus, and the turning over of all power, authority, and resources to the king of all creation. The good life, according to God, is not one in which I win while someone else loses. It is one in which I have participated in others having life. In God's good life, I cannot win unless you win as well, and vice versa. I honestly cannot imagine anything more countercultural!

Psalm 73:21-28

²¹ When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,

²² I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.

²³ Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?

And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish;

you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

²⁸ But as for me, it is good to be near God.

I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.

Friends, how honestly can we pray this alongside David?

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you?

These verses alone cut to the quick of our soul, and identify the idolatries of our hearts, if we will but meditate on them! Our lives need a resurrection check!

It is because of the resurrection that Paul can write that he considers absolutely everything else rubbish compared to the glory of knowing the risen Jesus.

It is because of the resurrection that the disciples tighten their sandal straps, and immediately return to Jerusalem to tell their companions what they have experienced.

And, friends, it is because of the resurrection that 21st century Christians willingly accept a different definition of the good life.

So, fine. What do we do with this? Listen to the criteria that Jesus uses as he judges, from Matthew 25:31-40:

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Friends, this is what it means to have a good life.

Let’s pray.