

Easter - 2023

The Cape of Good Hope

I can still recall a geography lesson from elementary school in which we learned that the southernmost point of Africa is a point which for centuries has experienced tremendous storms. For many years no one even knew what lay beyond that cape, for no ship attempting to round that point had ever returned to tell the tale. Among the ancients it was known as the "Cape of Storms," and for good reason. But then a Portuguese explorer in the sixteenth century, Vasco De Gama, successfully sailed around that very point and found beyond the wild raging storms, a great calm sea, and beyond that, the shores of India. The name of that cape was changed from the Cape of Storms to the Cape of Good Hope.

Until Jesus Christ rose from the dead, death had been the cape of storms on which all hopes of life beyond had been wrecked. No one knew what lay beyond that point until, on Easter morning, those ancient visions of Isaiah became the victory of Jesus over our last great enemy. Suddenly, like those ancient explorers, we can see beyond the storm to the hope of heaven and eternal life with the Father. More than that, we dare to believe that we shall experience in our own human lives exactly what the Son of God experienced in his, for the risen Christ says to us, "Because I live, you shall live also." This is the heart of the Easter faith.

(by Robert Beringer from *The Easter People*, CSS Publishing Company)

The Legend of the Touchstone

Do you remember the Legend of the Touchstone? It's a great story to recall on Easter Sunday morning. According to that ancient legend, if you could find the touchstone on the coast of the Black Sea and hold it in your hand, everything you touched would turn to gold. You could recognize the touchstone by its warmth. The other stones would feel cold, but when you picked up the touchstone, it would turn warm in your hand.

Once a man sold everything he had and went to the coast of the Black Sea in search of the touchstone. He began immediately to walk along the shoreline picking up one stone after another in his diligent and intentional search for the touchstone. He was consumed with this dream. He wanted desperately to find this miraculous stone. However, after several days had passed, he suddenly realized that he was picking up the same stones again and again.

So he devised a plan... pick up a stone; if it's cold, throw it into the sea. This he did for weeks and weeks.

Then one morning he went out to continue his search for the touchstone. He picked up a stone; it was cold... he threw it into the sea. He picked up another stone - cold! He threw it into the sea. He picked up another stone... it turned warm in his hand, and before he realized what he was doing... he threw it into the sea!

That's a good parable for Easter, isn't it? Because that can so easily happen to us. We can come upon a miraculous moment like Easter... we can feel it turn warm in our hands... but then (so dulled by the routine) before we realize what we are doing... we throw it away. Absentmindedly, mechanically, nonchalantly... we toss it aside and miss the miracle of Easter.

(by James W. Moore from *Lenten Series on Mark*, www.Sermons.com)

You'd think that Easter would come to them.

You'd think that the resurrected Jesus would find the disciples and bring Easter right to the front doors of their hearts. But not in the Gospel. The Gospel is downright busy with what we could call "holiday travel." The women are on the move. Jesus is on the move. And in the end, if the disciples want to see their resurrected Master, they need to get moving, too, and hoof it clear up to Galilee, a fair hike from Jerusalem (though we usually forget this due to our overfamiliarity with hearing the need for them to go see him in Galilee).

Is there significance to the idea that even the disciples had to go find Jesus? Is it significant that even with a resurrected Son of God walking around the planet that most people missed it and that even the disciples had to go hunt him down? Maybe.

On Easter we like to sing, "I serve a risen Savior, he's in the world today" but, of course, most of the world doesn't see him and, if we're honest, we don't see him around every corner, either.

But maybe that is why the Gospel fits our real world, the real church, and our real experience in both the church and the world: yes, Jesus is alive but you don't see him everywhere or just anywhere. That is the reality with which we all must live.