

16 – 20 MAY
WHAT NOW? JESUS IS GONE

With grateful acknowledgement to the Church of the Resurrection,
Kansas City for parts of this devotion.

For the full Scripture passage please click on the link

There is no doubt that for those first followers of Jesus, this was a confusing time. They were experiencing inexplicable events with no level of understanding. Now their Lord was gone. We too have times of confusion and doubt regarding the story of Jesus.

MONDAY – What now? Jesus is gone



Acts 1: 9 *After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.*



<https://www.bible.com/bible/111/ACT.1.9-14.NIV>

Luke wanted Theophilus ([Luke 1: 1-4](#)) and all future readers to know that Jesus' story didn't end in Jerusalem with the cross, the resurrection, or even the ascension. The risen Jesus told His followers His saving work would keep right on going through the rest of human history. As the risen Lord left earth, two men in white (like the heavenly messengers who announced His resurrection ([Luke 24:4](#))) said this was not the end of Jesus' story—He would return. His followers (including Mary, Jesus' mother—this is the last passage in the Bible that mentioned her) devoted themselves to prayer to prepare for the huge task that now lay before them.

Verse 14 introduces a theme that runs through the whole story of Acts: "The spirit of unity and the practice of prayer are major features of community life ([Acts 2:1, 42-44](#))." What united them? What do you imagine Mary, the eleven apostles, Jesus' brothers and the others prayed about? We need that prayerful, worshipful unity to carry out the mission Jesus gave us as much, or more, as they did. We need it to get through the times we do not understand.

Reflection:

In what ways can you cultivate a spirit of unity with those who join you in serving God? Do you doubt because you can't see? Do you find it difficult to believe this is all real?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, I get so busy, "devoted" to so many things. Remind me, how important it is that I devote myself to prayer. Help me keep my connection with You living and active and so believe with all my heart. AMEN.

TUESDAY – Doubt



Hebrews 11: 1 *Now faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

“Faith” does not mean never having doubts. Ask any believer if they have ever doubted and the answer will be a resounding YES. Hebrews 11 defined “faith” as trusting despite causes for doubt, saying, “Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don’t see.” Trusting “what we don’t see” can never totally exclude doubt.

By FAITH Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, built an ark.

By FAITH Abraham, when called to go... went.

By FAITH Joseph married Mary.

By FAITH the disciples began to preach and witness.

By FAITH we are called to trust the story.

Oxford scholar Alister McGrath wrote, “Coming to faith doesn’t mean merely having a new idea. It means recognizing in our minds who God is and what He is like and **responding to Him in our hearts.**”

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Reflection:

What are some of the most beautiful sights you’ve seen, or deepest loving relationships you’ve had? Was their beauty or love something you could “prove”, or did you need to take the risk of experiencing and trusting them?

Scholar Leon Morris noted, “There are realities for which we have no material evidence, though they are not less real for that. Faith enables us to know that they exist.”** Some would like to have proof beyond doubt; others simply put them down to coincidences. If this is the case, there are a lot of coincidences in this world!

Your faith will be strengthened when you wrestle prayerfully with the doubt of all that encompasses following Christ. Jesus understood doubt ([Matthew 26: 9](#)); and He understands when we doubt.



Prayer: Lord Jesus, You call me to trust that Your world truly is more real, joyful and free than the material world that tugs at my heart. Keep growing that faith deep within me. AMEN.

* Alister McGrath, *“I Believe”: Exploring the Apostles’ Creed*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1997, p. 22. ** Leon Morris, *comment on Hebrews 11:1 in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Abridged: New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994, p. 993\

WEDNESDAY – Foolish and Scandalous



1 Corinthians 1: 18 *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved.*



<https://www.bible.com/bible/111/1CO.1.18-24.NIV>

The apostle knew no PR person would try to impress Greeks, Romans or Hebrews with a crucified saviour. Yet he preached Christ crucified as a life-changing physical and spiritual fact with utter conviction. He relied on God's power, not sheer human logic, to change people's lives and thinking. He trusted that God's wisdom and strength were greater than this world's and found that they are.

Paul knew his message was "foolishness" to the Greeks and "scandal" to the Jews (verse 23). Just telling the story seemed to invite people to mock. The message sounded "weak," yet it carried God's power. Verse 18 stated Paul's conclusion: God's weakness is greater than human strength; God's foolishness is greater than human wisdom.

Reflection:

In what ways do you need to trust that God's saving wisdom is wiser than any other kind of wisdom you might rely on?

Paul said the Jesus the Romans crucified was the world's Saviour and Lord. Saving the world through the cross defied (and still does) most human ideas about power. In fact, it all sounds a little far-fetched doesn't it? As Donald Millar says: *"There is this part of me that wants to believe....I feel as though I need to believe....But it is all so completely stupid."* *

YET God is greater than our doubts and scepticism. He is loving and understanding of our inability to accept and believe. He defies logic and changes lives.

What our prayer needs to be is "Lord help me in my unbelief."



Prayer: Dear God, I am grateful that Your strength and wisdom are greater than the world's! I need that. Give to me the insight of Your power. AMEN.

* Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003, p. 53

THURSDAY – Liar, Lunatic or Lord?



Matthew 16: 13-16 *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

➔ <https://www.bible.com/bible/111/1JN.5.9-13.NIV>

“But who do YOU say I am?”

Perhaps the thoughts of two great theologians and writers can help us in examining our own position.

C S Lewis said *“this guy is an absolute deceiver and liar, **or** this guy is a lunatic, **or** this guy is the Son of God. And God worked in my heart such that, when I look at Jesus as he is presented in the gospels, I am just emotionally not able to call him a liar. I am not able to call him a lunatic. I have to bow and say, “You are God. You know God and you represent God and you embody God.”*

And then John Piper’s writings on the Apostle Paul: *“And I cannot bring myself to say he is a knucklehead, “He was swept away by some kind of experience that was unreal.” He is just too rational... He is too authentic.” **

Was Paul a liar and lunatic as well? Remembering he came from disbelief. Lee Strobel, author of *A Case for Christ* actively set out to disprove the existence of Jesus and was dramatically converted.

So where do you stand? Liar lunatic or Lord?



Prayer: Lord I turn my eyes upon You. I look full into Your face and I want to call You the Son of God. Please help me in my doubt.
AMEN

* <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/liar-lunatic-or-reliable>

FRIDAY – Belief



John 20: 29 *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*



<https://www.bible.com/bible/111/1PE.1.3-9.NIV>

There are two types of people in the world. Some who believe without asking too many questions. They believe until life contradicts them when they hit some hard facts of life and they question the things they had just accepted.

The second group of people have to work at their beliefs. They have enquiring minds and ask questions all the time. Evidence is required. They need to reason things out for themselves. Some things in the Christian life defy logic and reason, and therefore become a point of struggle for such a persons. Unfortunately some give up at this point and relegate spiritual things to 'nonsense'.

When one really encounters tough times in life, it will demand our deepest thinking. And when we have thought, wrestled and worked through it, as Thomas did,

our belief becomes solidified. However, even when the best of minds have done the best of their thinking concerning God and His ways, there will always be an area of reality which is beyond our capacity to understand. God is greater than we are, and the creature can never equal the creator.

Jesus gently teaches Thomas that some things have to be taken on faith. And if **we** are to grow in Christ, it is a lesson we have to learn too. As Paul says "For our life is a matter of faith, not sight." (2 Corinthians 5: 7)

The time will come when we run out of answers to our questions and then we have to decide: to walk away and declare it all nonsense; or in faith and confidence and say "My Lord and my God."

And so I ask: who do you say Jesus is?



Prayer: O Lord and my God what hast thou to say to me? AMEN