

My Thoughts for Sunday, 6 March 2016

I Am He, The One You Are Seeking

“I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”

John 18:8

These words were heard by all present. By His followers. By the friend who was betraying Him. By those who were out to do Him great harm. Today these words still reverberate loud and clear, directed to you and me. Is He the one you are seeking? If not, He should be!

This man was well known by His followers, His friend the betrayer and His soon to become persecutors and by His deeds and His name, Jesus, the Messiah.

The setting for what is transpiring is in a garden called Gethsemane, the garden outside Jerusalem mentioned in Mark 14 as the scene of the agony and arrest of Jesus. Jesus had come here to pray for deliverance from what He knew was soon to come. He prayed fervently to God, His Father, to take away this thing that was going to happen; but Jesus added these words to His prayer “Father, if it is your will,” as was written in the Gospel of Luke 22:42, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Yes, Jesus knew full well what would transpire in the next hours. He knew He would be spat on. He knew He would be beaten. He knew He would be flogged. Yes, He knew He was about to be crucified! Hung on a despicable cross like a common criminal! Before He came to fulfill His mission for us as our Savior, He had explained to His followers that He was to be delivered up to be killed. They didn’t get it! They could not understand how this Son of God, who was, they thought, to free them from Roman rule, could be crucified and die without fulfilling the plans they had for Him. Their problem was that they were not listening to Him! They were making their own plan as to what He was there for, not the eternal plan designed by God for our salvation.

Their vision was very shortsighted. They did not comprehend what Jesus was really doing for their eternity. Do we have that same shortsightedness at times? When we go to Him in prayer for help with our dilemmas do we look at just what we need Him to do for us? Do we sometimes overlook what He has already done for us by His death and resurrection? Do we overlook, sometimes, what He is still doing on our behalf, covering up our ongoing sins and shortcomings? Making us appear as righteous Holy children to His Father, our sins covered by His blood? It is so easy and often so normal for us to be just like those early followers; see what is in our plan for Jesus rather than see the big picture of the great love He is constantly showering down on us.

My question comes back again; “Is He the one you are looking for?” He is looking for you. He has always been looking for His followers to come to Him in love and gratitude for the gift He freely gave to us when He allowed Himself to be hung on the cross and willingly gave up His life to justify us and bring us eternal life with Him. Let’s take a short trip back to that time of His betrayal, death and resurrection.

Remember, Jesus had told His followers what was going to happen; His death, burial and resurrection in three days. Did they remember? Obviously not! Look what was taking place on

Sunday morning, the time He had said He would rise from the dead! Mary and the women were on their way to the tomb to prepare His body for proper burial. Why? They had been told by Him that He would rise. Then when Mary stood before the empty tomb and spoke to the man she thought was the gardener, she didn't recognize it was Jesus until He called her by name. Was she in a daze from His disappearance? His death? Or did Jesus actually cause her this temporary unrecognition? Let's fast forward to that run back to the house, by the women, to where His followers were in hiding. In hiding, WHY? This was the day Jesus promised to rise from the grave. Why weren't they there watching with anticipation? Wouldn't you have wanted to be there for this phenomenon? This was not like Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. This was their Lord, their Teacher, their Friend who was going to raise Himself up and walk and talk with them. And they were in hiding! What did His apostles do when Mary told them what had happened? Did they say, "WOW, He really did it"? Or did they even believe the women.? No, they sent a couple of their group to verify what the women told them about the empty tomb.

Are we this hard-headed and deaf that we can't or won't believe that he did exactly what He said He would do? Do we sometimes doubt the many other promises He has made to us and for us? Do we blindly turn away and go in hiding when we should be spreading the good news of salvation for all mankind through Him?

His betrayers had less doubt than His followers regarding His promise to rise on the third day. They went so far as to place a guard at the tomb to make sure no one took the body, claiming truth in His promise. They went to Pilate with this request for a guard out of fear that this man might actually do as He promised. Let's go back to the men in hiding. After Jesus had visited those who were present we read the account of the apostle Thomas in his doubt; *"Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."* John 20:24-25. Jesus did return to them again and spoke directly to Thomas; ... *"Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

What is it going to take to make you believe? Putting your fingers into the nail holes and your hand in His side? Are you going to wait for him to fulfill His promise to come again and take His followers to be with Him in heaven? Don't wait too long and fool yourself into believing that He has to take you with Him, even in your doubt and unbelief. You and I don't know if He is going to come before or after we are dead and gone from this earth. In the Gospel of St Mark, we read in verse 26&27; *"At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."* Jesus continues with this warning in verse 32&33: *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."*

As we approach that empty tomb this Easter Sunday morning remember, seriously reflect on what Jesus told His followers and us through His Word about just what His mission was in coming from His glorious heavenly home to die on a cross as a sinner, who knew no sin except those sins of ours that He freed us from. Jesus said it so well in John 3:16-17: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”* Remember Jesus’ words ***“I am He, I am the one you are seeking.”***

Remember this Christian hymn: “Christ Has Died, Christ Has Risen, Christ Will Come Again” Remember and be prepared with faith in the Good News of our risen Savior.