

THE EARTHQUAKE OF HISTORY

Psalm 118:14-24 (responsive)
Mathew 28:1-10

Faith Community
March 27, 2005

Introduction

Several years ago at a wedding, I met a family that had suffered through an earthquake in California. All of a sudden in the middle of a Saturday afternoon, the earth began to shake, the walls of their house trembled, and they began to crack. Pictures fell off the walls, shelves fell over, and dishes tumbled from kitchen cabinets. They told of the horrible feeling they had of helplessness and fear that they may lose their lives.

It was an awful feeling that their whole world was falling apart.

When it was all over, they had extensive damage to their home. They waited for the insurance company to fix their house and then they immediately put it up for sale. They quit their jobs and moved to the Midwest. "I will never go back there again," the husband said. They were so terrified that they had to get away as soon as possible.

The earthquake was such a dramatic event that it changed their lives forever. Their lives would never be the same. Easter is an earthquake event in the history of the world. It's a dramatic moment that changes everything. We can't see the world in the same way after the earthquake of resurrection. Look at the earth-changing meaning Jesus resurrection brings.

I

If the resurrection is true, then life has meaning in our world. The history of the world is not random events; there is purpose to life. Actions aren't pointless, but have meaning. The resurrection shows us that God stands behind history. Not only that, but God cares what happens to our world. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son."

First time parents began to worry about their kindergarten son. He wasn't doing well in school. He didn't seem to care what the teacher was saying. His attention span was very short. So they took him to a doctor to have him tested. They were afraid he might be mentally challenged. The doctor did all the tests and came back to talk to the parents.

"Your son is very bright. His problem is not his mental capability, but his vision. Your son needs glasses. He can't see the board at school. He can't focus on the teacher's face, so he misses a lot of what she's saying, and his mind wanders. Have him tested for glasses; he'll be fine."

The kindergartener's vision of the world was fuzzy and vague. When he got glasses he could see clearly what was happening, and then he could learn.

Christ's resurrection gives us a new vision of the world. We see how much God cares for the world. Our new vision helps us work for God's purpose here and now.

II

Not only does Christ's resurrection make a difference in the world, it makes a difference in my world. The resurrection of Christ clearly declares that my life has meaning. Because God cared enough to send Jesus into the world, it matters how I live my life. If Christ died for me, then what I do matters, how much I care matters, how I treat people matters – especially how I treat people who are neglected or put down. Because God's son came into our world to teach us, It makes a great difference whether we follow what he taught.

Writer, Frederick Buechner, has written that faith is knowing that your life is not just a story, but it's a story with a plot. Your life and mine are going somewhere; they have meaning. Because God loves us and sent his son into the world, it makes all the difference how we respond to that love. Because Christ rose from the dead, my actions make a difference.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is an earthquake event in history because it shows that your life and mine make a difference. The world has purpose; our lives have meaning.

III

Maybe the most dramatic change of this earthquake event is that death has lost its sting. In the resurrection, God demonstrated His power over death. On Easter morning, Christ defeated death, not just for himself, but for all of us.

It means that we will see again the loved one we've lost. That empty heartache we felt as the box was lowered into the ground will not last forever. The memory of those eyes, the turn of that smile, will be real for us once again – this time in the presence of God.

Paul called death "the last enemy." The resurrection changes our whole outlook on the world and on life and death. Jesus' resurrection conquered death for you and me. We will live on in God. As the Presbyterian funeral service puts it, "We look forward to glad heavenly reunion." Jesus' resurrection is an earthquake event that changes our view of life and death.

Conclusion

The Easter resurrection brings cataclysmic change. That single event makes all the difference. The world isn't a random meaningless place. It has purpose! You are not just one of billions of people who live and die without meaning; what you do and how you love makes a difference to God. Our last breath isn't the end; it is a transition to a closer life with God.

Mary and Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb at dawn. They found it empty. Then an angel told them Jesus had been raised. As they hurried away from there, they saw Jesus. He turned to them and spoke, and changed their lives forever. Jesus spoke one word, and now our whole world is different. What we didn't see before, we see now. Jesus' resurrection gives us a new vision of the world, a vision of meaning and hope.

Amen