

## The Big Reveal

### Matthew 28:1-10

I've never been a fan of reality television shows or reality TV stars. Still, I admit that not all reality shows are created equal. There are those that glorify family dysfunction and others that make love and courtship into a competitive sport. Then there are those that actually do have some redeeming social value. One of those was *Extreme Home Makeover*, which featured a family that had faced some sort of recent or ongoing hardship being rewarded with an extravagant makeover of their home. The climax of each season was the dramatic moment when the family got to see the completed transformation of their home. A great big bus would be positioned between the family, and the made-over home, so that they couldn't see what awaited them. Then the crowd would shout—some of you know what they shouted, right? “MOVE—THAT—BUS!” When the bus moved aside there was an outbreak of joyful tears and disbelief. That moment of disclosure was called “THE BIG REVEAL.”

Easter is Christianity's BIG REVEAL. What was revealed on that original Easter morning was not a remodeled home, but an empty tomb. What was rolled aside to make possible a viewing was not a giant bus, but a heavy stone. The momentous discovery was not what had been added, but what had been removed. Jesus was gone. The tomb was empty.

All four Gospels tell of the same Easter discovery, but each of them focus on different details and omit others. What is unique about Matthew's telling is that the women don't just discover that the tomb is empty when they get there, but that they feel the earth quake and see the angel who rolled the stone away from the tomb's entrance sitting on top of it like a realtor who had unlocked a home to be viewed by prospective buyers.

The Roman soldiers who had posted a guard around the burial site were quaking in their boots at the sight of him. I wonder if any of those assigned to secure the tomb were also among the soldiers who mocked, tortured and crucified Jesus. If so, they might have good reason to be afraid. The BIG REVEAL for them would have been that they may have just been the executioners of God's Son, and that this angel just might be there with vengeance on his mind.

But the angel tells the women *they* need not fear. What they had most to fear was that Jesus was gone forever, and with him all the hopes and dreams they had seen fulfilled in him. The BIG REVEAL for them was that Jesus was not in the tomb. And the reason that he was not in the tomb was that he had been raised. Resurrected. The angel invites them to step inside and see with their own eyes. Then he gave them a mission to fulfill. They are to go and tell the other disciples, “Jesus has been raised from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.”

Past, present and future are revealed in that message. “Jesus *has been* raised from the dead”, describes a fact. Something that had already, definitively taken place. “He *is going* ahead of you to Galilee,” tells them something about Jesus' present whereabouts. Not just that he is gone from

where he was but that he is going somewhere else. Galilee, where they had first met him. Where he had called them to be his disciples. But, not only is he going to Galilee, but they *will see* him there. The angel presented them with a future promise of a reunion with Jesus.

When that stone was rolled away from the opening to the tomb, it was not because Jesus needed to be released from *out* of the grave. It was rolled away so that his disciples could see *into* the grave and believe the unbelievable. All the disappointment, disillusionment and despair over the dead end that their Master's life appeared to have met was washed away with a promise that they would see him again. And directions on where to look for him. Jesus is going ahead of them. They will see him. That was the BIG REVEAL that the disciples received when the stone was rolled away.

And the BIG REVEAL for us after all these centuries is like unto it. The Resurrection of Jesus is something that happened long ago. It is ancient history that we read about in the Gospels. But if we only look backwards to witness the resurrected Jesus, we are looking in the wrong place. Resurrection happens here and now. Jesus is with us right where and when we are. He is more than a comforting memory to calm our fears during difficulties. He is an active power able to change lives in the present moment. He is *with* us. But he is also going *ahead* of us. Whatever future we might fear to face, Jesus is already there! He will be there to greet us and point us in new directions. So, there is a past/present/future pattern to resurrection.

Disasters like this pandemic also follow a past/present /future pattern. A pattern of orientation/disorientation/ reorientation. Before the disaster arrives is Orientation. It is normalcy; what we are used to. During the disaster we encounter disorientation. The old normal is being overturned by unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances. The old rules no longer apply. The old reality is shifting.

But on the other side of the disaster lies the possibility of reorientation. A resurrection. Reorientation is the emergence of a new normal. A future that is more than going back to what used to be, but where the lessons learned through disastrous experience give birth to something new and life-giving.

But for reorientation to happen, we must be willing to go to our own Galilee. To seek Jesus where he has gone ahead of us and waits for us to join him there. When the stone was rolled away from the tomb, it not only allowed us to look back at something extraordinary in the past. It permits us to look out from the fears that entomb us to see a future where Jesus is already at work.

Right now, in our stage of disorientation, there is more than enough despair and anxiety to go around. This pandemic is taking a terrible toll physically, psychologically and economically. Jesus is with us, though. To Comfort and encourage us. To inspire us to care for and look out for one another.

And Jesus goes ahead of us. He is already on the other side of this pandemic. He is already laying the groundwork for the victims of this tragedy to be restored and reestablished. Inspiring us to be better prepared for anything like this in the future. Or to lessen the likelihood of

something like this from reoccurring. Jesus goes ahead of us, his Church. We will see him when we look with eyes of faith and not fear. And others will see him in us, as we reflect his love to others.

The Apostle Paul said, “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.”

To seek the things that are above, not things on earth means to look beyond present realities and seek Jesus, following where he is leading us through the disorientation around us. That is the REALLY BIG REVEAL about you and me and the Church. So let us MOVE THAT STONE, step together into a new reality where Jesus awaits us, and live resurrected lives.

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