

The Third Sunday of Easter – 2021

Acts 3:11-21

1 John 3:1-7

Luke 24:36-49

I am going to be critical. I am asking you to adopt my point of view. I intend to illustrate this idea by using some examples. So, your car completely fails on you, and, after some difficulty, you manage to get it to your mechanic. Two options; what would you rather hear? Option 1: “yeah, I think that *maybe* I know what the problem is and perhaps, after some experimentation and a bit of luck, I *might* be able to fix your car.” Option 2: “I’ve totally fixed it, found the problem right away and all is solved. Come get it anytime.” You’re selling your house and the inspector says the foundation is cracked and has to be resolved before the sale can be completed. You hire an objective third party to evaluate this claim. Option 1: “I don’t know Mr. Smith, it seems *kinda* like the inspector *might* be right but I’m not *totally* sure.” Option 2: “The inspector is a loon, the foundation is fine, and I can absolutely prove it.” You’ve struggled with cancer; medicine, surgery, chemotherapy, radiation – the works – and now you’re going in for a final report. Option 1: “We sure hope that you’re going to be fine from here on out, but gee, you should probably worry about this the rest of your life.” Option 2: “We’ve totally nuked that stuff man; you are 100% good to go; hasta la vista cancer.”

I don’t know about you, but I’m an Option 2 kinda guy. What do you think Jesus is? In regard to death (forgiveness, life, salvation), I mean – is the risen King an Option 1 or an Option 2 kinda guy? Remember, I told you that I was going to be critical. It’s the translation, the Gospel lesson from the ESV (English Standard Version), it takes what is clearly an Option 2 reading in the Greek and transforms it into an Option 1 reading. Here’s a brief recap: the disciples are rehearsing all the wonder of the resurrection, talking about all the details of Jesus’ appearances and then their Lord and Master comes right into the room. He preaches to them His favorite sermon: “Peace be with you!” and the disciples are startled, frightened, thinking that Jesus is a ghost. The Lord Christ then both calls them out and calms them down. “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” That’s the “calling them out” part. No problem there. But check out the next line: “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.”

No! No way! What Jesus said is WAY better than that. “See my hands and my feet, that I AM myself.” They were frightened and the crucified and risen Lord shows them His hands and feet and He preaches His name – I AM. God’s name, His proper name, His OT name – Yahweh, I AM; Jesus Himself is a walking sermon and He adds the blessed Divine Name to His wounds in order to tell them that He is in charge, in order to tell them that fear is to be a forgotten thing, that their lives are completely safe. Option 2; Jesus is an Option 2 kind of guy. Death – I’ve nuked that stuff man; hasta la vista grave; you are 100% good to go bros. Why the ESV people take what is clear in the Greek, an awesome, super unmistakable, theological prince of a statement from Jesus and turn it into an Option 1 frog is beyond me.

The disciples were frightened and Jesus stands before them, God in the flesh, and tells them that “I AM” has been crucified and raised from the dead. They were frightened and Jesus stands before them and tells them that God, the great I AM, who has flesh and bones, wounds and unending glory, is risen and fear is overwhelmed by the splendor of it all. They were frightened

and Jesus stands before them, announces who He is – I AM – that He is the same God who was condemned, beaten, nailed to cross, laid (dead) in a tomb who is now physically raised from the dead and remains the eternal I AM. Oh, and it's not just them, not just the disciples.

The OT saints, as they made their way out of Egypt, out of a land of slavery and death, I AM reassured them, the Israelites, that He would be with them, that God and His immanent and real presence would be with them to redeem them, to protect and defend them, and faithfully lead them. Jesus is that ancient reality fulfilled. He leads us. Christ the King declares that He is with us, to the very end of the age. He is the active one here – we receive what the Lord wills to give. His ongoing presence in our midst makes this service *alive* with His ministry, *alive* with His resurrection and we become Option 2 people. Life, not death, is what He brings. Not partial life, not maybe life and maybe death, not Option 1 ambiguity – Jesus is a full-throated preacher of the resurrection and its heavenly implications. I AM, look at my hands and feet, touch me, and see.

He told them: “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms *must be* fulfilled.” Fulfillment of Scripture's promises is a Divine Necessity! Do you know why that is? It is because God is *determined* to save you. He won't depart from His eternal plan the slightest bit to the left or the slightest bit to the right. Jesus was crucified, in part, because He said, truthfully, that He was God. Before Abraham was, I AM. I AM the resurrection and the life. I AM the bread of life. I AM the light of the world. He was crucified by sinful man because He revealed who He was. Do you think that He is going to stop revealing who He is now? That is *precisely* what He did in that room filled with His disciples. He revealed who He was. In regard to the resurrection (life, hope and heaven), it made those same disciples Option 2 men. He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He opened their minds to understand all the **I AM** realities that had swept into their world, their lives, their hearts.

You have come here to hear this word. God knows that you need to hear it. He brings you here. You need to hear this Word, not because your car stops working, or your slab is cracked or you have to face the real threat of cancer – all those may be true. You need to hear this word because faith comes by hearing and no one is saved apart from faith. You are to hear this word because life is difficult and too often you look for answers other than Christ. You do this because you are afraid or bored or because the world is actively promoting something else. Pontius Pilate said the people could have someone released to them – Barabbas, a murderer, or Jesus, the Author of Life. Some called for Barabbas. As they did so, I suspect that other folks were influenced by that call and then lent their own voices to that vulgar request. The world still calls for Barabbas. Your sinful flesh is vulnerable to the unbelief that saturates our culture. You are to hear the full-throated Gospel because you are by nature prone to Option 1 in your Christian faith. You are full of doubts, you wander off into spiritual poppy fields and you pay entirely too much attention to what the unbelieving world thinks is right.

I have a dog. His name is Ace. It's a pejorative, an insult. If someone is not too bright, then you call him “Ace.” Awesome deduction “Ace.” Brilliant move “Ace.” How ever did you figure that out “Ace?” Ace is a great dog but I don't want him on my bed. I found him up there once and gave him a little negative reinforcement. So, I came home from work the other day, opened the door, and there is Ace, slinking down the stairs, head down, tail between his legs, doing everything in his power to avoid me – it was a neon sign: “I've been on your bed.” He was

acting like I was omniscient, like I already knew. Of course, I immediately went upstairs, put my hand on the comforter (my side of the bed, not Alise's)... and it was warm. God is omniscient. He knows when we betray our baptism, when we soil ourselves with the world's religion of self, apostasy, and raging superficiality. We avoid Him. When we act on our doubts, when we defy His Word, when we live a faithless week, we avoid Him – even in this place. We avoid being honest in confession, attempting to hide the truthfulness of our condition.

To us sinners, Christ comes into this place to announce His Name. I AM – and I was hanged on a tree to claim you as My own. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I AM your kinsman redeemer. He spreads the corners of His garment over you and calls you His own. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn sinners but to save them, to bleed and die for them, to rise again and nurse them with His righteousness. I AM washed Thornton this morning and made him His own. Thor's God is the only true God – the Great I AM who feeds us with His body and blood, who clothes us with the power of the Holy Spirit and makes us His witnesses. We are nothing but "Aces," dogs who would gladly eat the crumbs that fall from His table. But we are loved. We are loved and forgiven and fed and strengthened this day. Why? Because the Lord is with us. He opens your mind; He opens the eyes of your heart to see – I AM is risen! He is risen indeed.