

God Is Still

REMEMBERING LESSONS OF EASTER

The Easter season is a corporate and individual reminder of what we have in Christ. It reminds us of the sacrifice on the cross that was made for us to bring redemption and propitiation for our sins. It reminds us also of the hope that we have through the miraculous resurrection on that third day. This coalescence of sacrifice and hope gives birth to the reality that in God's economy of time, we have a place to belong and a place to make a difference.

This hope reminds us that even when life is at its worst, everything will still be all right. The Greek world had a philosophy known as fatalism, which believed that the world would be destroyed every two millennia. Fatalism gave credence to the lifestyle called epicureanism, which found its hope in the carnal pleasures of the moment. This belief only led to pain and hopelessness. Our resurrection faith and hope is the only thing that breaks through this facade of temporary happiness. The Apostle Paul reminds us that "if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14, NIV).

The Scriptures remind us that after the third day, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Joanna went to visit the tomb of Jesus. They saw the stone rolled away. They looked inside the tomb and saw two angels, who told them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5, NIV).

The disciples were looking for the right person, but in the wrong place. We see so many people today who are looking for hope in all the wrong places. They are spiritually bankrupt and filing a spiritual chapter eleven. They need a spiritual and moral restructuring through Jesus Christ. They have lost their sense of place in the divine order of God's plan.

One way to illustrate what this season can mean for our lives, and to see what God may have planned for us, is to look at the story of The Three Trees. There were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said, "Some day I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver, and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see my beauty."

The second tree said, "Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take kings and queens across the waters and sail to the corner of the world. Every one will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull."

Finally, the third tree said, "I want to be the tallest tree in the forest. People will see me on the top of the hill and look up to my branches and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me."

After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of herdsmen came upon the trees. When one came to the first tree he said, "This looks like a strong tree. I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter." And he began cutting it down. The tree was happy, because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest.

At the second tree, a woodsmen said, "This looks like a strong tree. I should be able to sell it to the shipyard." The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship.

When the woodsmen came to the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him, his dreams would not come true. One of the woodsmen said, "I don't need anything special from my tree, so I'll take this one." And he soon cut



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it down. When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed-box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for. The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship carrying kings had come to an end. The third tree was cut into large pieces and left alone in the dark.

The years went by and the trees forgot about their dreams. Then, one day, a man and a woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event and knew that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep, while they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to

keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man and he stood and said, "Peace," and the storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of kings in its boat.

Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the street as the people mocked the man who carried it. When they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of the hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it had been strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as possible.

The point of this story is that when things don't seem to be going your way, know that God is still close and has a plan for you. When we realize what this season of sacrifice and hope is all about, we position ourselves to place our trust in him. He will give you great gifts to be used by him. You see these trees got what they wanted, just not in the way they had imagined.

Our blessed hope this season is that God has a plan and a place for each of

us. Like those three trees, we don't always know what God knows, and what God has in store for us. We only see our current circumstance—and sometimes it seems that God has forgotten about us, and that there is no way for our dreams or hopes to be fulfilled. But Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."

If we can get through the Easter egg and the bunny rabbit diversions, if we can remember that God had a plan and a purpose for our lives, no matter what our circumstances, then this season becomes a time of joy—a season that reminds us that God takes the broken pieces of our lives that had been tossed away in darkness, and through his grace brings forth hope. □

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