

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Apr 1, 2018 – Easter Sunday

You Have Got to be Kidding!! (Psalm 118:14-24 & Acts 10:34-43)



**They put him to death hanging on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.
(Acts 10:39b-40)**

Overview

I'm going to continue imagining the impact that the Easter events might have had on me if I had been a retired functionary from the Temple in Jerusalem – an administrator who had given my life to making the Temple available for people to worship and experience the glory of God in all of its regal majesty – this time I've gotten together with the same old friends as before about a week after these crazy claims about the resurrection of Jesus started to circulate – around a meal and a few skins of wine

Provocative Points to Ponder

- As you know, I was intrigued by what I had seen and heard when Jesus entered Jerusalem a couple of weeks ago – particularly haunted by the idea that this had something to do with God's intent as witnessed to in the minor prophets, like Zechariah – that God would return in humility and peace, rather than in strength and conquest – and so I followed this Jesus around for the week – getting more and more bothered by how he was being treated – and more and more confused by what was happening
- I followed the soldiers to the garden – they were expecting trouble - a traitor in the ranks of Jesus' closest followers, all of whom were tough working guys from the villages and the sea shores – when they got belligerent, Jesus told them to back off – violence was not part of his approach – back to that message of peace from Zechariah – what's that going to get you? – well, you know by now what happened – and I was amazed at how easily his closest followers seemed to deny and abandon him – I actually saw that one they call Peter do it – flat out denied he knew Jesus
- The trials were pretty predictable, but still disturbing – my old bosses at the Temple were swift and firm – a blasphemous traitor, they said – sent him to Pilate for execution – and worked up the crowds to back them up – I was close enough to hear the conversation with Pilate – it was clear Pilate wanted no part of this conflict – but Jesus didn't help himself – and the high priests were determined to rid themselves of this rebel – in the end, as I heard it, it was Jesus' challenge to the Emperor's divinity that sealed his fate – but he was really challenging both the religious and the political authorities at their very core – not a smart thing to do in our day
- He was horribly abused on his way to the place of execution – beaten, burdened, mocked, pierced, and left to die a slow, agonizing death – I know now why I never went

out to see any executions before – and there was his mother at the foot of his cross – pain contorted her body – I never did see her face – only heard her sobs

- It took him a long time to die – tough Galilean peasant – there were three of them executed there that day – the other two were known to most of us as pretty violent robbers – and Jesus had this strange conversation with one of them – something about being forgiven and being with Jesus in paradise – it seemed pretty delusional that day – I left Golgotha thinking it was all over – but I was intrigued at how attracted I'd been to this man and his message – a universe governed by justice and peace – a humble companionship with God – I can't shake the attraction of that vision
- I went back to my Sabbath rituals – everything seemed normal for a Passover festival, except that I could spend it at home rather than running around the Temple trying to keep everyone happy
- then the rumours started to spread the day after – women finding an empty tomb – a huge stone rolled away – an angel saying Jesus had risen from the dead – then Jesus himself meeting them in the burial garden – telling them to tell his friends about his rising and promising to see them later – then the stories of him actually showing up – eating and drinking with them just like before, except for the marks of the crucifixion in his hands and feet – so many different stories – so many different takes on what happened here – so much confusion
- But here's what haunts me, even though my mind is confused – I overheard a couple of women who I had seen among his followers talking in the market today – they were convinced that Jesus was Yahweh's way of bringing about the promised redemption of the whole creation – that the insane challenge that this peasant prophet mounted to those who abused their economic, political, and religious powers by usurping the place as God's act of redeeming creation – and that we human beings, all of us, are now free to grow into our roles in this redemption by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with Jesus – this is God's doing, God's gift, God's salvation – they had certainly accepted it – I think I'm going to too – I just need to find a community that can help me make more sense of this wonderful love that is broader and deeper than anything I've ever imagined

Your Notes