

KEEP GOING
[written oral format]

Acts 10:34-43
Easter, Year A

April 16, 2017
Gordon Allaby

Those who tried to defeat Jesus -- he's way and message-- Failed!
They couldn't kill the message, and they couldn't keep Jesus down.
God intervenedfor all of us!

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We celebrate and proclaim the amazing resurrection of Jesus, and...  
when we allow ourselves to fully embrace the Easter Message, we become living witnesses to it.  
We become resurrection people.

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Good Friday represents and reminds us about the ways of evil. The crucifixion is an image of evil brute force in action. It is violence being used for domination. The whole narrative encapsulates the ugly, destructive law of the jungle in action,....as if we need to be reminded.

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This past week, with chest thumping and oo-rahs, the "Mother of all bombs" was used.....

And, two delusional alpha dogs are howling at each other, threatening war on the Korean peninsula.

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It is Easter. We are called to be resurrection people.
We need not resort to brute force, and we need not fear.
Peter proclaimed in Acts 10: "You know the message God sent [of Jesus preaching peace. God is Lord of all.

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Resurrection people are those who embrace / take hold of and become the living Christ.

Resurrection people proclaim the way of Peace, as Jesus did.  
They are gracious and loving, and .....with great humility and hopeful determination,... they / WE press on.....like a seed sprouting.....new life after a winter season.

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From the nadir of hopelessness, there is a New life / a new way / a better way to live.

From despair and death, from the ashes the Phoenix rises.

There is hope. The presumed end is Not the end.
The story isn't finished yet.
From failure to success is the vision of those who own the resurrection.
To be sure, not as the secular world measures success, but rather it is a success that lives by giving life.....by creating and loving as God has shown us through Jesus.

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Resurrection people are NOT those who merely know "the way".

Resurrection people, by the power of God's Spirit, **live the way** of Christ--God's way. It's living love.

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I think too often, we excessively focus on the detail / on the theology, as if we need to be correct,...as if getting it right is life giving.

Over the years, I have often been challenged by those who disagree with fragments of my theology. I don't know why they think they have to have the theological details perfectly correct.

I do know that doctrine can be so contentious. ~~~~~

This is going to sound like a contradiction:

the theology/ the Christian doctrine really doesn't matter that much, yet it explains the reason and the process, and that does matter,.. a lot.

Did that make sense?

I'll put it a different way. To break down and learn all the psychology reasons and the chemistry factors for why I fell in love with Leslie would not make much of a difference, except in awareness. I did not examine and analyze those factors before I spoke to her, ...yet they were there.... and were influential.

On the other hand, we could avoid great disappointments and heartaches, if we thoroughly screened each potential romance. ???

Okay,.....maybe that wasn't a perfect analogy.

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I'll try another one, after I quote verse 35 of Acts 10.

Peter said, "...I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but [everyone] **anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God.**"

Fear means deep, sincere submission, knowing that God is God and we are NOT god.

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How we relate to God and how we live is the criteria for divine acceptance. There is no mention.....of knowing all the doctrine and the details. Albeit, knowledge is helpful.

Nevertheless, we don't worship the dogma or the Bible. The resurrection is like love. It invites us to change / to live / to truly live with God / with love. It's a relationship

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A different analogy

Remember when you learned to ride a bike? ???? I do.

To breeze down the road on a bicycle is truly a wonderful experience.

As child, I thought it felt like I was flying.

The world became smaller; I could venture out farther away. I could zoom much faster than I could run,.....and feeling the wind blowing by was grand, indeed.

Remember when you learned to ride a bike?

Do you remember who taught you / who helped you to learn? ???

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Before you got on the bike to learn how to ride it, did you first study the manual.
Did all the explanations convince you that it was a safe and good thing to do? Was the logic correct?
Was it clear and certain?

Did you spend classroom time memorizing the dynamics?
Balancing on two wheels **IS** a marvel of physics.

Of course, the rider adjusts the front wheel / the steering wheel in order to keep the centre of mass over the wheels, but there is much more to it than that.
Did you study and understand the gyroscopic effect, before you tried to ride the bike?

The gyroscopic effect is the balancing force created by the spinning wheels, and that combined with the mass distribution provides some vertical stability. Both are affected by the longitudinal acceleration, which can also enhance balance.
The forward force of movement and the spinning wheels aid in keeping the bike balanced / from falling over.

This is fact. This is the scientific truth!

No doubt, you studied how to change directions / how to turn. ??
Turning requires leaning into the turn, and more leaning is required with greater speed or a tighter turn. Leaning uses gravitational force to counter the centrifugal force caused by altering the direction of motion.

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Did you learn all the physics before you tried to ride a bike?

And, Did the fear of falling scare you from learning?  
Did the instability of being on a motionless bicycle forever dissuade you? There is a significant risk in being higher off the ground,.... and going fast.....if /when there's a mishap.

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I bet you didn't know all the details and reasons for how a bicycle works. Yet, how did you / how did anyone overcome the terror of cataclysmic collision.
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How? We observed and we trusted.  
We witnessed other people/ other kids having great fun riding a bike.  
It was appealing. We wanted to experience the same thing.

*The church grows when others experience/ see resurrection people in action.  
When resurrection people live as Jesus did, when believers do grace and stand up against injustice and brute force, it's powerful, . . . .as powerful as the resurrection.*

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We observed.....and we trusted. We trusted the person teaching us to ride the bike.

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From the New Testament, we learn the way of Christ, AND we are frequently told why we can trust Jesus.

Peter did this in today's text, saying:

The prophets predicted Jesus.

God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit. God believed in him. He was God's son,.....and that should be enough reason to trust.

But there's more:

Jesus lived for others, doing good and healing people.

Jesus was killed, yet God raised him, and numerous people recognized this and testified to it.

Jesus' way/ life was/is trustworthy,.....trustworthy as God's love.

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Who taught you how to ride a bike?

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My sister taught me how to ride a bike, and she didn't mention anything about physics.....or theology.

But, I trusted her.

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At first, she held onto me, as I tried to keep balance.

She ran alongside of me, holding me.

Then, she ran alongside of me, while only holding the bike seat.

And, I could feel the power of her presence that kept me from falling down. I could Feel her holding on. I could Feel it!

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Consider this process and compare it to how we teach others about how to live / how to live the way of Christ.

Maybe we need to do more holding on and running alongside. ??

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Finally, when my sister thought I was ready, as she was running next to me, ....she let go.

I could feel the absence of her grip,..... and I yelled, "Don't let go!"

Don't let go! ..... "Why have you forsaken me?"

But, she yelled back, "Just keep pedalling! Just keep going!"

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Just keep going!

All the invisible, physical forces will come into play, when we just keep pedalling.

Just keep going.....Just keep trusting in the way of Jesus, Just keep living as God inspires,.....and the invisible power of the resurrection will kick in. It's divine love.

And,.....the wind will begin to blow.....

Suddenly, I was riding a bicycle down the street,..... and just as suddenly,.....I ran into a parked car.

Hey,.....nobody said life would be easy.

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We are resurrection people.

We rise again, and with the power of God's Spirit,.....we keep going,.. The story / our story is just beginning.

Gordon's post deliver footnote:

Peter is not suggesting "salvation by works". We do not earn salvation. However, our actions reveal God's Spirit in /with ours. We follow Jesus and do righteousness and justice because of our love--God's Spirit within us.