The second word is patience or waiting. The empty day is a day of rest and waiting. They could do nothing on the Sabbath. They simply could rest and wait for the third day. Waiting on God is part of the way we get to the third day. Now this is the hard part because waiting does not mean doing nothing, nor does it mean simply giving into the grief, doubt and burden. Go back to the text. Why did they rest? They rested because it was the Sabbath. They rested not because they gave up or threw in the towel or chose to believe something else. They rested out of obedience. They continued to be obedient to God. The death of Jesus had not changed the fact that it was the Sabbath and they were commanded by God to keep the Sabbath. The death of Jesus had not changed the fact that God is still God. It was the Sabbath and they were obedient and that meant waiting.

O what God can do when we are obediently waiting. The Empty Day of Saturday reminds of the importance of waiting on God and that is also obedience. The first command of Jesus at his ascension is go and wait for the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Richard Spier says there are five things waiting on God does for us:

- 1. Waiting Reveals our True Motives
- 2. Waiting builds patience which is one of the fruits of the Spirit
- 3. Waiting builds anticipation
- 4. Waiting is when God transforms our character
- 5. Waiting builds our dependency upon God.

Waiting on God is active waiting and it is a time when God is very busy in transforming us into His image.

The final word comes from the Empty Tomb and that is rejoicing. As odd as it sounds we should do the rejoicing, even as we are on our way to the third day. Now in our text the rejoicing comes after they remember Jesus' words and see the empty tomb. For us rejoicing comes knowing that the tomb is empty. We are blessed because we live on this side of Easter and because of what God has done in Christ we can rejoice no matter what day it might be.

Paul writes "rejoice the Lord always and again I say

rejoice." Rejoice and give thanks in all things for this is God's will for you.

"They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried."

What are you carrying this morning? You are in a three-day story so on this Easter day remember this:

There is an empty cross; God's work is done through the obedience of Jesus.

There is an empty day. God is at work in our waiting. There is an empty tomb. This is a day for rejoicing. The resurrection means that ultimately all of our day ones and day twos become a third day.

He is risen! He is risen indeed.





Trinity Baptist Church
4815 Six Forks Rd * Raleigh, NC 27609 * (919) 787-3740

Dr. Jeff Roberts Follow on Twitter @Jeff_Roberts April 20, 2014

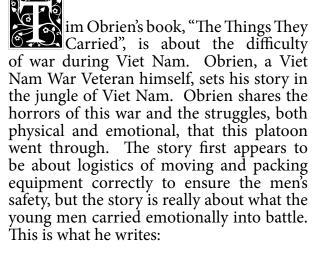


PULPI

TRINITY

Empty Cross... Empty Tomb

Luke 23:50-56, 24:1-12



"They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing--these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice.... Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to."

Obrien also writes:

"They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried."

They carried more than they could bear, including the silent awe of the terrible power of the things they carried... maybe that applies to Easter Sunday. As I thought about our text from Luke today, I thought about the empty cross and the empty tomb and all the things we carry there. Jesus' followers carry many things to the empty cross and empty tomb. To the cross we know that Joseph and Nicodemus carried linen covering for Jesus' body, and 75 pounds of spices to prepare his body. We know that on the first day of the week, the women also took spices they had prepared to the tomb.

Yet, we know they carried much more. We might begin with what they did not carry to the cross and the tomb. They did not carry hope. The hope that Jesus had offered to so many seems to have disappeared like the morning dew or a whispering fog. The hope that seemed so real that you could touch it, taste it, and hear it was gone. As Jesus expelled his last breath it seemed as though hope disappeared. Jesus died and as far as they were concerned hope had died with him. They did not bring hope to the cross or the tomb.

They did not bring joy. Because the story ends with incredible joy we think the day begins with joy, but there is no joy at the cross or on the way to the tomb. They don't carry joy.

They don't carry peace. If anything they carry chaos. Their whole world has been turned upside down. If this can happen then anything can happen. If God can't protect Jesus, his own Son, then surely God will not protect me. If God can't stop this injustice from happening, then the world is surely a dangerous place and there are no guarantees. There is no peace.

The three characteristics we would assume are in the story of the cross. Hope, joy and peace are non-existent when the story begins and even in the middle of the story of Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

What did they carry? They carried some of the same things we carry to Easter Sunday. Now all of us want to come to Easter with hope, joy and peace. That is why we come on a day like this. This is that day. If there ever is a day we are to get up with hope, joy and peace... surely it is Easter. But I wonder if we are not like those in Obrien's story. They carried all they could bear and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible

power of the things they carry.

What did they carry to the empty cross and to the empty tomb? They carried the burden of responsibility. I notice who is there and who is not there in these stories. Who is not there are those that should have been responsible. The disciples, the 11, should have been there, but they were not. There are those who took responsibility on both days. At the cross there is Joseph of Aramethea and there is Nicodemus. Two prominent men who I would assume are use to taking responsibility. They were part of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court. They were use to being stand up guys. They were use to making unpopular decisions and living with the weight of responsibility. Interestingly the others there were the women who had followed Jesus. There was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of two of the disciples, Mary the mother of Jesus, Salome who many think was the mother of James and John and Suzanna the wife of the head of the household of Pilate. These women had also been those who took responsibility in their lives. There is something about being a mother that infuses most with the weight of responsibility. We are told that these women not only traveled with Jesus, but they supported him. In other words, responsibility is nothing new to them.

At the cross and at the tomb there are those who bring the burden of responsibility. The men and the women carry with them a burden of responsibility. When the others fall away they stay. When no one will step up, they come. When it seems the ones who should have been there have deserted Jesus, they just keep coming. There is a burden of responsibility.

Some of us come today with all we can bear and then some. The burden of responsibilities of life weighs heavy upon us. Some of us feel we are alone in this and no one is there to help. Some of us feel as though we will drown and smother in responsibility. The single mom or dad who must play the role of the parent. The child who is living with the role reversal of caring for an aging parent and there are no days off, knows of the weight of responsibility. The grandparent who is parenting the grandchild or the spouse who is working hard at a marriage and the interest is not reciprocated all know the burden of responsibility.

Just like those in our text, we bring the burden of responsibility. Why does much of the advertisement today in our culture feature the element of getting away or escaping reality? It is the burden of responsibility.

Now don't hear me wrong. Responsibility is right. Responsibility is the sign of maturity and spiritual maturity. Yet, we must admit with it comes a burden to bear. We find it at the cross and at the tomb.

They carried grief. At the cross there was no hope, joy or peace but grief... overwhelming grief. Grief at the loss of life, grief at the loss of expectations, and the grief of the change of everyday life. Their lives were being turned upside down and when our lives are turned upside down whether it is from death, and achieved expectations or a sudden change... there is grief.

We too carry grief into this day. On a day of resurrection we still carry the sting of the death of a loved one. On a day of the certainty that Jesus lives, our lives are in transition. Just like those on the first Easter we carry with us unfulfilled expectations. We carry grief, even on Easter day. We are not the first.

They carried doubt. One of the remarkable things about all of the resurrection accounts is how much doubt exists. As Christians, who have been taught never to doubt, we are really surprised when we read the resurrection stories because more than any other emotion is the expression of doubt. In the Luke, account we have read this morning, we find the women at first doubting. Verse four tells us "they were wondering about this." When the women go and tell the disciples their first response is "they did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense." That does not make sense. Even after Peter gets to the empty tomb we are told that he went away wondering to himself what had happened.

In the gospel of Mark we are told in Chapter 16 that the women were bewildered and trembling. Over and over again Mark says the disciples did not believe when they heard the news. Only after they see him.

John also has the story of Thomas who struggled with faith until he could see for himself.

Doubt is carried to the empty tomb and even from the empty tomb the first Easter.

If there is a day for faith it is Easter. Even those who struggle with faith and expressing their faith through out the year find a way to attend worship on Easter and express faith. Yet, the truth is there may be some of us who have arrived today for Easter worship but doubt what we carry today.

We might not doubt the story of Jesus but our misgivings may be more around not is Jesus alive, but what does that matter? We may have no problem confessing Jesus is risen, but we struggle with the confession God cares. We might feel that there is much more silence than there is speaking, when it comes to our experience with God and with Jesus. We have our doubts.

Our text is interesting because there is something missing in the Bible text. We have the story of Friday and we have the story of Sunday, but where is Saturday? There is a white space in my Bible between Chapter 23:56 and Chapter 24:1. All we get is that they rested on Saturday. They rested. They

WAITING ON GOD IS

ACTIVE WAITING AND

IT IS A TIME WHEN

GOD IS VERY BUSY IN

TRANSFORMING

INTO HIS IMAGE.

did, as they were to do and kept the Sabbath. Exhausted by grief and the burden of responsibility and uncertainty they rested.

It has been said that Friday was the horror event and Sunday is the event of hope but Saturday is the day of doubt. Saturday is the day between where there is nothing but doubt. We might say

that between the Empty Cross and the Empty Tomb is Emptiness.

The cross and resurrection is a three-day event. Did you know that the Bible is full of three-day events? Abraham sees the place of the sacrifice for Isaac and Isaac is spared on the third day. It was on the third day after fasting that Esther enters to thwart the Persian Kings plan to kill the Jewish People. It is the third day that the Israelites after preparing themselves crossed the Jordan into the land of promise. Of course it is after three days that Jonah being in the belly of the great fish is vomited upon the dry ground.

Three-day stories have common themes. There is the trouble, there is the doubt and uncertainty and then there is the resolution, redemption and salvation.

The hard part about a three-day story is that you do not know you are in a three-day story, until the third day. All you know is that trouble has come and now everything is uncertain and most of the time we are convinced we are going to have to live with the trouble and uncertainty forever. In three-day stories the third day never feels like it is going to come. It is unknown. In fact, in some cases... it seems like nonsense.

On the day between the Empty Cross and the Empty Tomb was a second day. The second day is filled with doubt and uncertainty. Some of us are right in the middle of a three-day story right now in our lives. That time is our time of doubt.

"They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried."

What are you caring this Easter morning? Maybe you carry some of the same things those in the Easter story carried. Yet, the real news of Easter is that even though they carried a burden, doubt and grief on that day... when the day was complete all of this had become joy and hope.

How do we move from day one and day two in a three-day story? That is really our question.

What I notice in the Luke account is that everything changes for the women when they remembered His words. The two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening say to

the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee? The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." Notice the next verse. Then they remembered His words.

It was when they remembered Jesus' promises and words, the second day became the third day for the women.

Let me give you three words from the Empty Cross, the Empty Day and the Empty Tomb as a way to get to the third day. The first word is obedience. The word of the Empty Cross is obedience. The cross is the reminder that Jesus was totally and completely obedient to God the father and God's plan. We are told that Jesus was obedient to even death on the cross. The cross and every moment that led to the cross were filled with obedience. Jesus released himself to the promise of the third day through obedience. When we carry our burdens, our grief and our doubts... we turn to obedience. We make the choice each day to remain obedient to the words and command of Jesus. We serve, even when we don't feel like serving. We confess our faith, even when there are doubts. We keep obeying God, even when we do not at this moment see the results.