

Notes for Easter  
April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in Mitchellville, MD.  
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PART 1:

Learning through Perplexity, Ignorance and Amazement

- In the recitation from Luke you will have noticed the word, *perplexed*. The women who had followed the Lord all the way from Galilee, and who had witnessed His crucifixion, were PERPLEXED when they came to the tomb on Sunday morning and did not find His body.
- What does it mean to be perplexed? (Puzzled – bewildered – confused – completely at a loss)
- And why do you think they were so confused? Hadn't the Lord warned them again and again that He would have to suffer, and be crucified, and then rise again on the third day?
  - ◆ Well, for sure He had told the disciples, and even if the women had not been present when He told them, they must have talked about it with them afterwards.... In any case, as we read in the recitation, when the women reported what they had seen to the disciples, THEY didn't know what to think either, for "their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them."
  - ◆ You might think, since the Lord had told them all about this before-hand, they might be celebrating when they found His body missing from the tomb.
  - ◆ But no. They were completely at a loss – just as we are when we hear what the Lord has to say but just can't imagine it - especially when it involves the promise of very positive, joyful things at a very difficult time in our lives. How can such a bad thing lead to something good? How can something so despicable, so brutal and so final be turned even by the Lord into a blessing? They didn't get it; and so, often, we don't get it either.
- But if we can honestly admit how perplexed we are, and also that WE REALLY DON'T KNOW what's going on; if we can allow ourselves to BE TRULY AMAZED – like Peter, who "marveled to himself at what had happened," obviously thinking deeply about it – then despite all the pain and confusion we may finally come to a place where we can understand something very deep and important, something very powerful and necessary, something we would have missed if we hadn't been "blown away" in the first place.
- This is what happened both to the women at the sepulcher and to the other disciples. They were completely astonished and bewildered by what had happened to the Lord. But when they finally saw Him with their own eyes and fully realized who He was they were at last able to believe in Him with all their hearts, to know for sure that He would ALWAYS be there for them, and to begin the serious work that He had given them to do, taking His message of love and wisdom and power to all the world, beginning at Jerusalem....

- But, you may ask, do we always have to go through this perplexity, this ignorance and this amazement before we can understand the truth? Do we have to be confused or bewildered? Can't we just accept that the Lord is always there? Do we always have to question and disbelieve before we finally get it?
  - ◆ We'll be talking about this a little more later, but for now let's just remember that the way we learn is always slightly different for everyone. (Peter and John, for example, had different reactions to the news of the Lord's resurrection; so did Thomas and others.)
  - ◆ But one thing we all have in common, one way in which we are ALL ALIKE, is that we are born natural and we have to become spiritual. We are born selfish and we have to learn how to be concerned for others. We are born loving the things of this world and we have to learn to love the things of heaven. This means we have to change our whole basic outlook, and that is HARD to do.
  - ◆ So, yes, in some ways – different ways for each of us – we must go through this process of being perplexed, otherwise we'll never open our minds to any new ideas; we must come to realize how ignorant we are, or we'll never listen to the good news the Lord wants to give us; and we need to have a sense of wonder about the Lord or we'll never appreciate how truly wonderful He really is.

## Part 2:

### The Real Meaning of the Lord's Life, Death and Resurrection

- Have you ever met someone you know in a place where you didn't expect to see her, and said to yourself, "Who IS that person? She looks so familiar!" But because she isn't where you normally expect to see her you just can't be sure who she is.
  - ◆ This is how it must have been for the disciples when the Lord joined them in their walk toward the village of Emmaus after His resurrection. He must have looked and sounded familiar as He spoke with them, but, we read, "they did not know Him." – No doubt because they never expected to see Him again!
- So WE see how little the disciples really knew about the Lord's life and death and resurrection. He had told them repeatedly about all these things before those final days, and now here, in the resurrection, He had walked with them *for some time* explaining "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." But they still didn't get it. They didn't even RECOGNIZE Him – until finally He broke bread with them at the end of the day.
- Fortunately the story has a very happy ending: eventually they did get it and after being fully convinced of His wisdom, love and power they went out with great courage and commitment, not only to DO what He had taught them but to help others learn and do so too.

- But that was then – long, long ago. Now we need to understand why all this is important to US: – what the Lord's life and death really mean to us, and most of all what His rising from the grave still does for us today.
- First of all, remember the third lesson. The Lord came into this world with a human body and mind so that He could face the bad people in this world and the evil spirits in the world of spirits, and teach them the lessons they needed to keep them under control. He did not come to FORCE them to be good people; He knows that we need to be free to choose a good or evil life, otherwise we aren't really human. So He didn't MAKE the bad people be good, but He limited their power and put them in their place by clearly teaching what is right and wrong so that no one who believes in Him can be tricked any more into an evil life along with them.
- How did He do this? Not by fighting against people – though He certainly ARGUED with them in order to teach them. The remarkable thing about the Lord's life is that He never laid a hand on ANYONE, EVER, to do any harm, or even to defend Himself, ONLY to help and to heal. But He put the evil spirits in their place by resisting and fighting against all the bad thoughts and feelings that they tried to put in HIS MIND, and so He showed them that they had NO POWER over Him.
- In fact, He also showed the bad people in the world that THEY had no power over Him when He allowed them to kill Him -- or THINK they had killed Him – and then came right back to life and continued to teach and inspire people with His love.
- But this process of putting evil spirits in their place wasn't easy! He did have to struggle, and sometimes it seemed to Him as if He might not be able to do it. Sometimes it seemed to Him as if He didn't have the power He needed, as if God were somehow separate from Himself. So He prayed to God as if He were someone or somewhere else.
  - ◆ WHY WAS THIS? Our final lesson explained it a little: it was because He had taken on a human nature just like ours, and that human nature was inclined to be selfish and to love this world just like us. So He had to fight against that part of Himself and teach it to do the right things even when it didn't want to....
  - ◆ Of course, He had the power to do this because in His spirit He really WAS God simply clothed with a natural body and mind. But that natural body and mind had to be trained, and brought into order, which took time, and often, in the process, when He thought about things from His natural point of view He would become very sad and feel very lonely.
  - ◆ So in many ways the Lord's work was just like the work He asks US to do. Still, He was never really perplexed or confused! WE get that way because we don't know what's going on, but the Lord always knew.... He knew what He had to do and why He had to do it, and He knew what would happen in the end.
- Here, then, is the amazing and wonderful truth of Easter: – the truth is that by letting

people treat Him so badly, in the end He was able to prove that NO POWER in the spiritual world or on earth could keep Him from teaching and sharing His love. He was able to prove that truth and goodness themselves cannot be destroyed. And He was able to prove that He will always be here for us in OUR times of weakness and confusion if we will only turn to Him, and trust Him, and honor His Word.

- This is why we say NOW that anyone who really believes in Him and does what He teaches can be protected by Him from evil spirits, and so from evil thoughts and evil feelings, no matter what may happen to us.
- This is the gift of Easter. This is the great blessing of the Lord's life AND death AND resurrection. "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Amen.

Lessons: Luke 23:55-56 and 24:1-12 (as a recitation)

John 20:1-3, 11-18

Luke 24:13-27

Doctrine of the Lord 12:1 and 35:6