

546: A Fat Duck

I read this quote a few years ago from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be." That is what I have tried to do through the Monday Memo and my purpose teaching: Inspire you to be who God created you to be, who you have always wanted to be. I have found, however, that some resemble the duck described by the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. I hope you aren't like this duck, but just to make sure you aren't, you had better read on.

GROUNDED

The story has it that there was a duck flying with other wild ducks when they flew over some tame ducks in a barnyard. The wild duck decided to stay with these tame ducks for a while. He stayed for an hour, a day and then several months. Finally, his wild duck cohorts flew overhead one day and beckoned the wild duck to rejoin them, which he gladly did.

He found, however, that his barnyard living had made him so soft and heavy that he could not fly high enough to join his former mates. So he dropped back into the barnyard, promising that he would get in shape to join them the next time. The next time he heard them, he flapped his wings but could not even get off the ground. Finally, after many attempts, wishful thinking and a lot of broken promises, the wild duck became a domesticated bird that looked good but never went anywhere.

FLYING HIGH OR NOT AT ALL?

Did you dream of flying high at one time? Better yet, did you actually taste the heights you had determined to reach? Then where are you now? Are you still flying high or content with the safety and provision of the barnyard full of chickens and goats?

I am almost 62 years of age and I still have a lot of flying I want to do. This summer, I will release my 14th book. I now teach at the university at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I continue to produce regular Bible studies that are regularly sent to 4,000 people, as well as writing a daily devotional. I want to fly high and refuse to forsake the heights of productivity for the safety of the barnyard, with its regular rations. I listen to music that inspires me, go to places that move me and read books that engage me. I want to fly high and far and I do things that contribute to those objectives.

Flying high can be dangerous, but the view is fantastic! This week, ask yourself some tough questions. Do you talk about flying, or do you really fly? Are you content with barnyard chatter and routine, or are you ready to flap your wings to see how high and far you can go? I hope you are ready to fly and you will take others with you on the journey. I look forward to seeing you in high places. If you settle for the barnyard, we won't be meeting any time soon. Have a great week!

547: Making Easter Personal

Easter Sunday is next week, so I thought I would represent my Memo I have written in the past concerning the Resurrection. I hope you spend some time meditating this week on the significance of Easter and what its significance for your PurposeQuest.

A PACKED HOUSE

My church has six weekend services every week, and we are getting ready for overflow crowds next weekend. People who don't darken the door of a church throughout the year will come to church on Easter Sunday along with some who have returned to the area to visit family, which will make for a packed house.

They all sit with the regular attenders, family and friends, and pay homage to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. It is probably the same in your church.

We will assemble next week and say by our presence, "Yes, we believe Jesus was dead. Furthermore, we believe that He was in the tomb for three days. Yes, we believe that God raised Jesus, who was both fully God and fully man, back to life. And yes, we further attest to the fact that Jesus ascended into heaven, and that our flesh, Mary's boy, intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father." I hope you agree that those affirmations summarize truths of Easter. But is that all the truth of Easter?

It always intrigues me that many will come and attest to these truths yet all too often those truths have no meaning or application in their daily lives. Stop for a minute and ask, "So what if Jesus was raised from the dead? What difference should that make in my life?" Those are good questions; let's try to come up with some answers.

MAKING EASTER PERSONAL

If you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, then you can believe God for anything! If God raises the dead, which He does, then He can cure cancer. He can provide for your business or ministry. He can transform you into the person He intended you to be, that person you want to be. If God can take a dead body and give it life, then nothing is beyond His miracle-working power. What's more, you have the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead living in you! It is not a replica or a portion of that Spirit. You have the Spirit that raises the dead living in you. Here is what Paul had to say about the implications of this Spirit-resident:

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (Romans 8:9-11).

I trust you plan on being at your local church fellowship next weekend. Don't go as someone merely giving mental assent to a historical fact, go celebrating the truth that God is alive in You Then find how to release that resurrection power into your life, relationships, work and purpose. If you can believe that God raises the dead - and you should - then you can believe God for anything. Have a great resurrection-power-filled week! Happy Resurrection Day!

548: Easter Breakthrough

Yesterday we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord and I trust you were in your local church (or some church) to commemorate the event. Can you imagine what it must have been like for those disciples, who thought Jesus was dead and gone, only to find that He was alive and thriving? It must have been a shock to say the least and that is what I want to talk about this week. I want to look at one of the women who went to the tomb on Sunday morning only to find it not as she thought it would be. So let's go back in time and see if there is any lesson we can learn from her encounter with the empty tomb.

TWO ANGELS AND THE LORD

When Mary came to the tomb, she found it empty and went to inform the disciples. They went running and found it as she said, while Mary stood outside crying, assuming that someone had stolen and hidden Jesus' body. Two angels sat in the empty tomb and spoke to her, asking her for whom she was looking. She said that she was looking for Jesus, and repeated her assumption that someone had taken Him away. It was then that Jesus Himself appeared to her:

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher") (John 20:14-16).

Mary was well acquainted with Jesus and certainly knew His voice, yet her preconceived notion that Jesus was dead and gone prevented her from hearing the Lord's voice. Her thinking affected her perception and she could not hear God speaking to her, even though she knew His voice. The same can happen to you and me.

EASTER BREAKTHROUGH

Mary's thinking was an impediment to hearing God's voice. The same can happen to you. You can be consumed by worry, fear, doubt, wrong assumptions or anxiety and miss the Lord, even though you are familiar with His voice. You can read His word and still not comprehend His word because of your heart or, should I say, mind condition. You would do well to heed the admonition found in Hebrews 4, where the writer warned:

God again set a certain day, calling it "Today." This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7).

What situation do you consider hopeless into which God is trying to speak today? Where is there a tomb in your life, where you think you know what the outcome will be, but where God wants to speak to your heart and bring hope and life? You may not think your heart is hard, but any number of things can numb or deaden you to the presence of God in your life and His voice in your heart. So in effect, God can be speaking to you and you not realize it's Him. Thus the barrier to your breakthrough is not in your circumstances but rather in your mind.

One of the lessons of Easter is that what is impossible with man is possible with God. You must see your situation from God's perspective or you may miss what He is trying to say and do, and that would be a real tragedy. So go to the tomb today, but don't go in a hopeless state of mind. Go expecting to hear the Lord and see new and fresh things. When you do, your circumstances may not change, but how you see them will, and that may be the breakthrough you are looking for and God wants you to have. Have a great week!

549: Courage

I was on a talk radio show in Nairobi several weeks ago, and had many people write in via Facebook or by text while I was on the air. The most commonly asked question was, "How do I find my purpose?" and that is number one every time I am on. But I also got some great testimonies from those who have heard me over the years. One of them was from Rose and I promised to feature it in a *Monday Memo*. So here it is, Rose (although I am not sure I had any role in Rose's decision, but it's a great story anyway). Thanks for sharing.

COURAGE

Rose had courage to do something that many people only dream of, but I will let her tell you in her own words:

Recently I resigned from my job of 10 years. The job was wonderful and had a good medical coverage. I traveled the world through my job, but I was very unhappy and the more I stayed the more I got sicker and the more stressed I became. This brought me to a point where I had to take a journey down my heart to discover what is it I can do. I discovered one of my hobbies to be the key to what I have always wanted and

I thank God for helping me make this decision. It took me two years to go down my heart....and when time came, not even my friends could convince me to stay in the job. My employer had a serious conversation with me not to quit my job, but time had come and I had to leave.

Rose faced the reality in her heart and the reality was that something had changed and she had to go discover the joy and wonder she had lost. I am not sure what she is doing now or how far along she is in its development, but she certainly sounds relieved. What can you learn from Rose?

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Now please hear me: I am *not* saying this is the ideal or norm and that you must do what Rose did. I am saying, however, that you must have the courage she had and has to face reality. And you must have the courage to face the fact that you may have to make a faith step at some point along your purpose journey. Don't try to talk yourself out of how you feel and don't allow others to do so either. You don't have to leave your job tomorrow; if you are unhappy, you do have to acknowledge that to the Lord and to your own heart.

I have quoted Proverbs 14:10 many times in the *Memo*, but it bears repeating in this context: "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy." You know what you feel and no one can understand it or persuade you otherwise. If you are without joy and miserable, admit it! And don't try to figure out what tomorrow will bring; just live in the reality of today and that reality may be frustration, anger, disappointment or boredom. Your purposequest starts (but won't end) there.

Thanks again, Rose, for sharing your story. I don't know if you read the *Monday Memo*; maybe someone who knows you can send it along. I would enjoy hearing from time to time what progress you are making, and that goes for any *Memo* reader. Don't think your story can't help others; it can, but you have to have the courage to share it after you have the courage to live it. Thanks, and have a great week!

550: Purpose in the Psalms

I am preparing to teach a new class (for me) this summer at Geneva College and that course is a study of the Psalms. I have chosen four textbooks to use and am finishing the last one as I write, entitled *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms* by Jerome F. D. Creach. It is not the strongest of the four books I have chosen. but wouldn't you know that the Lord used it to show me something that I can use for this *Monday Memo*. To start, let's turn to Psalm 90.

PURPOSE IN THE PSALMS

Psalm 90 was written by Moses, who concluded the psalm with these words:

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands (14-17).

This psalm sounds like something out of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes, but it was written long before either were composed. Notice what Moses prays in this psalm:

1. That God's people will be filled with joy and gladness every day for all their days;
2. That God's people will need this joy because they will experience affliction;
3. That God's favor would rest on the people;
4. That this favor will manifest by God establishing the work of their hands.

Unless I am mistaken, that last point in verse 17 is directly related to purpose, which Moses referred to as the "work of our hands."

FAMILIAR THEMES

We have seen these familiar themes before: joy, gladness, favor, work, and establishing. It is fascinating that Moses had purpose in mind when he prayed. He saw purpose as the means by which affliction and suffering can be mitigated.

Perhaps you are searching for purpose, or maybe you have purpose but are facing tough times, called "afflictions" in this psalm. Then these verses from this psalm would be a good prayer to pray! You can only pray it, however, if you believe that it's God's will for you to have joy in your work and that He wants to establish the work of your hands, not just in church work, but in your life's work.

If Moses mentioned purpose and it was included in the Psalms, and the New Testament has purpose, then we can safely say that God is a God of purpose, not just in past, but now. So as you pray this prayer, expect God to answer it, with a life of purpose that will be a source of strength and consistency even in times when the world around you seems to quake. Thanks, and have a great week!