

☞ How Quickly Things Can Change

Today is probably the most important day in the Christian faith. We celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I find it very interesting that we are at the peak of the impact of the Coronavirus at this time. We've all been dealing with radical changes these past few weeks and many of those changes happened rather quickly. We've gone from business as usual to quarantines and closures in a flash. Who would have thought?

The week leading up to the crucifixion of our Lord was a week of rapid, unexpected changes. On Palm Sunday, the crowd is shouting and praising Jesus. They are giving glory to God for all the healings and miracles they had seen. They are welcoming their king into Jerusalem. This is the beginning of the week. However, they misunderstood his true intentions. They were setting themselves up for disappointment. They had a preconceived idea of what Jesus was going to do. How often do we do that?

☞ God doesn't always do things the way we expect him to...

In John 12:14, Jesus was riding on a donkey. He did not come in on a stallion like a conquering king. Even though he was not riding a stallion, they were expecting him to be their warrior king and do battle against Rome. The people were superimposing their own ideas on what Jesus was doing.

John's gospel makes it plain that even his own disciples did not understand what was going on at that time. It was only after the fact that they put it all together and understood.

In Luke 19, Jesus was driven to tears because the people did not recognize what was really going on. God was coming to bring peace, but they thought he was coming to declare war. In fact, Jesus made it even plainer than that... they simply did not recognize that God was coming to them.

Many in the Christian world are seeing this Coronavirus in a similar light. It's a wakeup call from God, and yet many in the world can't recognize it. But even we Christians don't always recognize what God is doing. Sometimes God is right there nearby, but we don't sense his presence. Sometimes God is moving powerfully in our midst, but we don't recognize it. We often have preconceived ideas about how things are supposed to happen. But God doesn't always do things the way we expect him to...

"When God moves, everyone will be crying." "When God moves everyone will be shouting and dancing." "When God moves, people will be running to the altar." "When God moves, there will be phenomenal miracles and healings." All of these are possibilities. However, God can move any way he chooses. He could do any one of these or more. But if you're only looking for that one way which you expect, you could miss the work of God. We need to be ready for whatever God may want to do! I never thought I would be preaching to a camera and reaching more people than ever before. I didn't really want to do church this way, but God is using it to spread the gospel. It has not been the way we expected. We've had to adapt, because God doesn't always do things the way we expect.

Luke 19:45-46 says that he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling.

☞ All of the Gospels record this. The first thing Jesus did upon entering Jerusalem was **disrupt their normal practices**. The people were very self-absorbed and thought Jesus would simply endorse their ways and rebuke their enemies. But instead, Jesus rebuked them! How quickly things changed for those people. Things didn't go as they expected. Our normal practices have been disrupted lately. Perhaps the Lord is using this pandemic to shake and wake the world and at the same time revive his people. In fact, biblically, God always does reform in his own people first, and when troubles come he expects his people to lead the way in repentance and realignment. If your "normal" has been disrupted, it's time to turn to God.

☞ Often, when God moves in you, **he will challenge your way of thinking**. He will challenge your way of doing things. You may think you've got everything in order, but then God will point out something you hadn't thought of before. Have you noticed that? You think you treat people pretty well and you control your temper; or you don't lie or steal; and so on. But then God moves in your heart and he points out that nasty thought you just had yesterday. Not what you were expecting! That is often God's way. He likes to do the unexpected!

Jesus didn't do what they expected. He challenged their way of thinking. They were expecting him to confirm their way of life, but instead he confronted their ways. They were expecting a warrior king, but he arrived meek and mild bringing in peace.

Then, for Jesus, himself, things changed rapidly... Luke 23 tells us that just a few days later ...they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" In less than a week people went from rolling out the red carpet to calling for an old rugged cross. The disciples were walking with Jesus in a triumphal entry, but by the end of the week they were running for their lives.

How quickly things can change! God might do things differently than you expect. What you are looking forward to in your life could happen in a completely different way. Your world can be turned upside down in a moment. How will you respond? For many this has already happened in the past few weeks. How are you responding?

☞ **Things can change very quickly. Are you ready?** What if all your money vanished in a moment? What if all your plans were turned upside down in short order? What if your friends turned against you all at once?

What if; what if; what if? Are you prepared? Jesus and the disciples experienced a sudden change; and now most of us have too! Where are you putting your faith? Will you still trust God?

☞ **Will your faith stand?**

For Jesus, just a few days ago there was a parade in his honor! Now look how he is being treated...

Matthew 26 says that the Sanhedrin, "men of God," spit in his face and struck him with their fists.

In Matthew 27 they came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. And, (they) persuaded the crowd to ... to have Jesus executed.

Everything is going south for Jesus very rapidly. The people he came to save are turning against him. They not only reject him, but they want him dead! They would rather release a murderer than Jesus. He had challenged their way of thinking and now they want him crucified.

Matthew 27 also tells us that while under trial the Roman soldiers stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They ... mocked him... spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. Then they led him away to crucify him.

☞ **Jesus was tortured and mocked simply for representing God!** Things couldn't get much worse! He was beaten and whipped so severely that most people died from the trauma and blood loss. But Jesus survived that and then he was crucified between two thieves. He was sentenced to die like a common criminal. Then they mocked him and added insults to his pain. You think you have it bad? Crucifixion was a horrible way to die... Large nails pounded through the hands and feet; insufferable thirst; gasping for air while putting all the body's weight on that one nail through the feet. This went on for several hours. As Christians, we understand that he was completely innocent ☞ and went through all of that on our behalf. That should have been us! **He suffered for us!**

Matthew 27:46

Jesus cried out in a loud voice... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus even felt like God was rejecting him. How bad is that? Then, finally in Matthew 27:50ff...

☞ **He died for us!** He's wrapped in burial cloths. He's buried in a carved out tomb. A boulder is rolled into a groove sealing the entrance to the tomb. Soldiers are even guarding his grave. This is as bad as it could get!

How do you suppose the disciples felt at that moment? Their world had just fallen completely ☞ apart! How quickly things changed for them. A **parade** and **praises** just a few days ago; now it's **persecution** and **punishment**.

☞ **And now, the rest of the story**

Matthew 28 tells us about the empty tomb... The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I ☞ know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.**

The resurrection is the most important part of the Christian faith. Many try to discredit the validity of the resurrection knowing it makes or breaks Christianity. I want to reaffirm your faith today...

Evidence for the Resurrection by Josh McDowell...

☞ **FACT #1: The tomb was empty**

The disciples of Christ did not go off to Athens or Rome to preach that Christ was raised from the

dead. Rather, they went right back to the city of Jerusalem, where, if what they were teaching was false, the falsity would be evident. Both Jewish and Roman sources and traditions admit an empty tomb. "No shred of evidence has yet been discovered in any legitimate source that would disprove the empty tomb."

☞ **FACT #2: The stone was moved**

If the disciples had wanted to come in, tiptoe around the sleeping guards, and then roll the stone over and steal Jesus' body, how could they have done that without the guards' awareness?

☞ **FACT #3: The guards went AWOL**

They fled. They left their place of responsibility. How can their attrition be explained when Roman military discipline was so exceptional? The fear of their superiors' wrath and the possibility of death meant that they paid close attention to the minutest details of their jobs.

☞ **FACT #4: Jesus appeared repeatedly**

The apostle Paul appealed to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Christ had been seen by more than 500 people at one time. He reminded them that the majority of those people were still alive and could be questioned. Paul says in effect, 'If you don't believe me, you can ask them.' Another factor crucial to interpreting Christ's appearances is that He also appeared to those who were hostile or unconvinced, with Paul being a prime example.

☞ **FACT #5: The Disciples were confident**

The most telling testimony of all is the lives of those early Christians. We must ask ourselves: What caused them to go everywhere telling the message of the risen Christ? They didn't attain wealth and status for their story. Instead, as a reward for their efforts those early Christians were beaten, stoned to death, thrown to the lions, tortured and crucified. Every conceivable method was used to stop them from talking. Yet, they laid down their lives as the ultimate proof of their complete confidence in the truth of their message.

The resurrection is a fact. Brooke Foss Westcott, an English scholar, said... "There is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ."

☞ **Jesus is alive!**

See how quickly things can change! Everything was as bad as could be, but suddenly it changed! Jesus was at the bottom. His friends had abandoned him; he was tortured and mocked; he was killed in one of the most gruesome ways imaginable. But then, suddenly, he was alive again!

How quickly things can change! The disciples had scattered and were fearful for their lives. Their dreams of being part of a coup against Rome were completely lost. Their leader had been captured, tortured, and killed. But, suddenly, they find the tomb empty! Jesus is alive! And because ☞ he is alive, **he has authority and power to change your life!**

How quickly things can change! Your health may be troubling you, but God can suddenly change the situation and heal you! Your wealth may be fleeting away, but God can suddenly turn the tide! Your friends may have let you down, you may have lost favor with people, but God can suddenly

come to your rescue! You may be in the worst situation of your life, but God can suddenly change it all around.

There may be some listening today who have never experienced the life changing power of God. You've never given your life over to him. Without exception, everyone of us has made a mess of things at one time or another. And for some, it's your entire life that's a mess. I want you to know that God can change that in an instant. He overcame death and the grave... he can overcome your ☞ problems as well. I urge you... **give your life to God**. Admit you need help. Ask him to save you from your sinful condition. Ask him to take charge of your life. He's living today and will do a much better job of it than you ever could. Will you welcome God into your life? Will you give him control? If you'd like to do that for the first time today, you can pray something like this...

☞ **God, I see how quickly things can change. I know that I need a change in my life, so I'm coming to you for the help I need. Please forgive me for my sins and take charge of my life. I surrender everything to you. Thank you, Lord. And since you died for me, help me to live for you. Amen.**

If you just prayed that prayer and turned to God for the first time, I'd love to hear from you. You ☞ can **send me an email at pastor@booneopenbible.com and simply write, "I prayed that prayer today."** That would be awesome.

Now, I'm sure that many listening today already know the life changing power of God, but you've been down and may feel the troubles are overwhelming. Perhaps you've thrown in the towel. You've given up. But I want you to know that God can make things change very quickly. Your personal renewal could be just around the corner. Will you look to God? Will you keep the faith? Will you hang in there?

Things changed rapidly for those Jews in Jerusalem. Jesus didn't do what they expected. Things changed rapidly for Jesus. Praise turned to persecution in a matter of days. Things changed rapidly for the disciples. Their leader was dead, but he came back to life. Things can change very rapidly for you.

☞ **Have faith! Be encouraged! Jesus has risen and he can raise you too! How quickly things can change. Your situation may be about to radically change for the better! When it does, give God the glory!**

Lord we see how quickly things can change. I have to say praise the Lord for how things quickly changed some 2000 years ago. Jesus died for our sins, but then just a few days later he rose from the dead victorious over sin and the grave. Praise the Lord. God, many today have experienced sudden changes recently and it's been difficult. Help us all to keep our faith; to keep on trusting you; to keep on pursuing you, no matter what. We are asking that you would bring about another sudden change and put an end to these troubling days. We will give you all the glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

Imagine that scene when Jesus rose from the dead... and then join in singing an Easter favorite:
Christ the Lord is Risen Today

