

Easter: The Evening

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Grab a seat. Let me make two sermon unrelated announcements really quick. You know Jesse Martin, right? Jesse Martin and Jen Martin, who Jen Martin does the children's ministry, Jesse Martin used to lead here in the, you know, up front and stuff and preached a few times. I just thought you guys would like to know that he just got a job in Ottawa, which is great because, you know, you do a titso, you go through Regent and then it's like, goodness, you know, I've got to earn some money now and got to get a job and I've trained and what am I going to do? And so yeah, he got a job at an Anik church, an Anglican network church called St. Peter and St. Paul, right? St. Peter and St. Paul in Ottawa, which is a guy called Peter Donison is running that. Great guy, great city. So that is awesome news. So if you see them around, pat them on the back and pray for their, you know, their transition. And also Neil and Celeste Allen, would you just come up? Let's, let's pray for you guys. Let's find out what's happening in your life, which is really exciting. I was going to get them to talk into this, Dan.

Yeah, yeah, you might as well go on that side, yeah. This is Neil and Celeste Allen. Neil, Celeste. There you go. There you go. Tell us, tell us what's happening. Tell us what's been happening over the last 25 years.

It seems like. 25 years. Yeah. I have been alive for 25 years. That's strange, isn't it? The last three years, three years ago, we started on a journey to adopt a little boy from Ethiopia.

And on Sunday, we're going to get him. So, yeah. Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo!

Woo! Well, so are you going for the court date and the pickup? Or do you have to stick around and how does it work? Okay, so there's a court date, which May 7th, we have to show up in Ethiopia.

[2 : 07] We presume they stamp something. And then we are his parents. and then we have to get an Ethiopian passport for him and then we have to apply for a Canadian visa for him to come.

So it could be that we go and pick him up and that's what we're praying. I think it's looking like Celeste will stay there and I will come home. My parents are also going with us so that will be a big help for us and my dad is going to stay with Celeste.

But that could be a month, two months. But we're praying that it's very quick. Shorter. Yeah. So how can we pray for you specifically? We can pray specifically that it would be shorter.

Right. I have no fears whatsoever except I'm scared to meet Bekela for the first time. So does he know that you're coming?

I believe he does not. Wow. So we've known but he doesn't. Wow. I'm sure we'll meet him and then it'll be fantastic.

[3 : 09] Yeah. Everyone lives happily ever after. That's what we'll pray. Well team, let's pray. Father, we are grateful that this is finally looking like Bekela can come to Canada, Father.

Lord, this has been a long and painful journey. And God, it has been hard on their hearts, Lord. Father, I pray that they would know great joy in these next few months, Father, as they meet Bekela. Father, we pray that you bless that meeting, Father.

More importantly, Lord, we pray that they would grow together as a family. We pray for Bekela, Lord. We pray that he would transition easily into Vancouver, Lord.

That's going to be, you know, that's a huge change, Father. Lord, would you bring him, would he know your presence and your comfort, Father, in this transition?

[4 : 15] Would the whole family know that? Would they know your kindness, Lord? Would you bring him friends, Father? Would you transition him into schooling if he's old enough, Father? And Lord, we pray that these transitions, in these transitions, Lord, this family would know that you are with them.

In Christ's name, Amen. Thanks team. Wow, that's exciting. So next Sunday, next Sunday. So you won't be here next Sunday? No, we won't. Okay, okay. Okay. Well, speaking of children and families happening, I have a little girl called Sadie and she's almost two. She'll be two in a couple of months. And I remember when she was born, it was madness, right? So we had, Amy started getting contractions at sort of early in the morning, I think. And so we thought, right, we're on. Let's go. It's business time. So we go to the hospital. And contractions last about sort of like, you know, 10 hours. And then it all starts going sideways. They're monitoring the heart of the baby quite closely. And they notice that during the contractions, the baby wasn't, just wasn't coming, right? And the contractions, the heart rate would just dip significantly during the contractions.

[5 : 44] We found out later it was because the umbilical cord was wrapped around the neck, right? And she was squeezing it during the contractions. She was holding onto it. And so at some point, the obstetrician said to us, we need to get this baby out.

We need to do like emergency sort of scenarios. There's an emergency scenario here. This is after about 10 hours of being in there. And they said, we're going to take her down to emergency room right now.

So I went down to the emergency room. They said to me, here's some, you know, scrubs, like what, you know, what doctors and nurses wear. Here's some scrubs. Go into the bathrooms and get changed, Aaron, so you can come in with us.

So I went in there. The whole time I'm trying to be really strong, right? Right, Amy, this is awesome. Like emergency surgery, great. This is what we've been praying for. This is great. Yep, it's all going to plan.

This is awesome, Amy. This is just how I wanted it. And so I go into the bathroom, burst into tears. I don't really understand what's happening.

[6 : 45] I don't know what they're going to do. I just know it's craziness. And so I'm afraid. I'm terrified. I'm scared.

I'm trying to be brave. But I'm also really, really looking forward to being a father and really looking forward to seeing what this baby looks like.

And, you know, does she have red hair? She doesn't. Which is, oh, well. You know, like there's all these things. I've got this, I have this maulstrum of emotions, right? Just going through me. Like I couldn't pinpoint any sort of one emotion. It was ranging from joy and excitement to just being terrified. And I was thinking about that as, I mean, it was nothing like what I thought it would be like. Like I expected, you know, like Amy would go through contractions and I'd just be quietly reading a poetry and just reading the Psalms too. And we'd have jazz music playing in the background.

[7 : 46] It just doesn't, that doesn't happen. It doesn't happen sometimes. Anyway, I was thinking about that experience as I was reading this passage. As I was going through it, I started underlining all the emotion words.

There's lots of emotions in this passage. I'll read them out to you. Startled, frightened, troubled, doubting, disbelieving, joyful, marvelling. So these guys were just all over the show.

Absolutely all over the show. They're hanging out in this room. They had heard that Jesus maybe was alive. And then suddenly in the midst of them he appears.

I don't know what that looks like. I don't know if it was like a Star Trek thing or kind of like a, he just sort of snuck up on them. Don't know. But he's just right there all of a sudden. And he appears and he says basically, if you could summarize these two paragraphs, it's really me, number one.

And two, I have something for you to do. So it's really me, that's verses 36 to 43. And I have something for you to do, verses 44 to 49.

[8 : 51] So that's going to be the structure of the sermon. So section one, it's really me. Verse 36. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them.

And he said, peace to you. So Jesus himself. Did you notice the, well I guess he would have, because I tried to emphasize it. The passage seems to emphasize that, but there.

Jesus himself. It's not just he stood there, Jesus stood there. Jesus himself stood there. This is no ghost. It's no phantom. It's no projection of their hopes.

This is, the projection of their hopes, this is often a way that liberal theology will get around dealing with a miracle.

Which the resurrection is. It's just an incredible, incredible thing. And if your theology has no room for something like this, you need a way of massaging the passage into your worldview.

[9 : 56] And so they will say things like this. They'll say, well it wasn't a bodily resurrection. It wasn't historic or physical, but rather an ecstatic experience of the disciples. Yes, Jesus was resurrected in our hearts.

He lives on in here kind of thing, right? Which sounds really nice. And it is a way of dealing with an event which has no precedent. So it sounds nice, except that the passage is written in such a way as to explicitly counter this type of interpretation.

You can't get that from the passage. The details of it do not lend itself to a mystical interpretation of this event, but rather a very practical interpretation.

It's written as history. It says the fish was broiled, for example. We even know how the fish was cooked. It's written in such a way as to mean what those words mean when you put them in that order, in a sentence.

That's what it means. It's not like, well, together they ate the fish of hope. And it was like Jesus was there.

[11 : 11] I mean, it doesn't say that, right? It's like Jesus asked for some food. He ate some fish. You know, like it's... It was really him. He really turned up.

Verse 39. Jesus says, See my hands and my feet, that it is myself. Touch me and see I'm no ghost. I'm real. And verse 40.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. Hands and feet. He's obviously, he's showing them the scars, right? The scars of his hands and feet. More evidence. They go, no, this is really, really me.

Look. You see that? It's right. It's me. But he's not only saying it's me there. And let me go on a slight, a small theological excursion here.

Why were the scars still there? Why were they still there? Let me explain it like this. The story arc of a regular movie is something like this.

[12 : 14] Good. Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad. Good. You know, it's like paradise, paradise, lost, paradise, right? A really good story, though, is like this. Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad, bad, bad.

Bad, good. Do I need to explain that more? Okay. A really great story is one in which the bad is part of the deliverance.

Where the bad is part of the good. I'll give you an example. The movie Signs by Knight M. Shalhamahala. Right? Like, it's a great, I don't know how to pronounce this name.

I love that movie because I like science fiction, right? So I love this movie. So story, Mel Gibson, he is a minister of unknown denomination, but he's a minister who has lost his faith.

His wife has died in a car accident. His son has terrible asthma. His daughter has OCD about water. His brother could have been a great baseball player, but he swung at everything, and so he got struck out a lot.

[13 : 23] And then aliens invade the planet. So it's basically, you know, it's basically a true story. Now, at the end of the movie, if you haven't seen this movie, I'm totally spoiling it for you.

At the end of the movie, the alien is ready to kill the family in their lounge. And the alien is holding the sick son who's having an asthma attack. And Mel Gibson remembers the final words of his wife, because he was there when she died.

The final words of his wife, which were, tell Meryl, which is the brother, to swing away, swing away. So Mel says this. Mel Gibson says this to Meryl, the brother. He says, swing away.

Meryl gets what he's talking about. He realizes, he remembers that there's a baseball bat on the wall. And he grabs the baseball bat. At that point, the alien remembers that, feels like he's going to get attacked.

So he sprays poison onto the really sickly son who's having the asthma attack to kill him. Now, the son actually survives the poison because his lungs are closed up because he's having an asthma attack.

[14 : 28] Meryl swings, hits some water on the alien, which is like acid to this alien, looks around the room. There is like 20 cups of water in the room because the daughter is really OCD about water.

So there's like 20 cups of water all over the room. So he's swinging at all this water and the water is splashing on the alien. Alien dies and it's great. So here's the point.

All of the bad things that happen to Mel Gibson, all of the bad things that happen to this minister, end up being part of his family's deliverance.

So his wife's final words, the bat, the swing away, the water, the asthma saving the child, ironically, it all ends up being part of the deliverance.

This is why the scars remain. The crucifixion. The very worst thing that humanity could do to another person, they do to God.

[15 : 25] And God uses it to save those very people who did it to him. So the scars are there. They're not just saying it's really me. That's the big idea.

It's really me. But it's also saying I didn't just make it through the cross. They tried to kill me. I had a plan. It got off track. They tried to kill me, but I beat them.

Or they almost had me, but I had this neat resurrection track or anything. It's not saying that. It's saying no. The bad is part of the deliverance.

The cross is part of God's eternal plan. It had to happen. It was meant to happen. And the scars remain to show that. And after making that profound theological point, Jesus says, so has anyone got anything to eat?

I went to the cross. I'm resurrected. I'm really hungry. Of course not. That's not what's going on here. His hands, his feet, his voice, his scars weren't enough to convince them.

[16 : 29] Weren't enough to convince their doubting hearts. He offers another proof. He's pushing them on the fact that he is really, really real. He's bodily there. And he does this by eating with them.

And I guess he's trying to show them that, you know, when I eat this fish, it's not going to just fall off, fall out. You know. Or when he eats, when he passes through a wall, it's not going to be all mushed up against the wall of fish or something.

You know, like it stays in his body. He was physical. But of course, like the scars, there's more going on here.

It's not just, look, I'm really real. It's also saying, I want to be with you. Because in the ancient world, you know, eating was more than just for sustenance, more than just kind of cool hanging out time. When you ate with somebody, you were inviting them into deep friendship, into intimacy. Jesus is saying up until this point, I really did live, I really did die, I really did get resurrected, and I really want to be in a relationship with you.

[17 : 39] That's what's going on here. I said this a few weeks ago, but I'll remind you. You know, when we pray, we are praying to a living being. We're not venerating a memory, a tomb.

We're not calling to mind an ancient philosophy. When we pray, we're praying to a real person, a real person who wants to hear from us. That's what the meal's about.

It's the intimacy that Christ invites us into. Wow, that's pretty cool, eh? It's really me. It's really me. Point one. Point two. I have something for you to do.

Let me read verses 44 to 49 again for you. Then he said to them, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

[18 : 49] You are witnesses of these things and behold, I'm sending the promise of my father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. Having shown his disciples that it's really him, he now wants to reorient their life around the gospel.

You are my witnesses. He wants them to live lives shaped by this gospel. And there are five things. Five things he says about the gospel, okay?

Five things he says about the gospel. Firstly, the events of the gospel. They are about the death and resurrection of Christ. That's 46. The death and resurrection of the cross. I'll put it like this.

The gospel is not just an idea. The gospel is history. The gospel is history. It really happened. The second thing, he wants to let us know about the content of the gospel.

Verse 47 there, we see it is about repentance and forgiveness. Folks, the gospel is bounded. It is not dynamic. We do not change it because it doesn't sound cool, because it doesn't fit with our modern sensibilities.

[19 : 57] The gospel is bounded, not dynamic. It is about repentance and forgiveness. Thirdly, we learn about the scope of the gospel.

It says, bring it to all the nations beginning in Jerusalem. That's verse 47 again. Why in Jerusalem? Because the heart of the gospel is the events of Jerusalem. Fourthly, we learn about where the gospel is accredited.

What do we learn about the gospel? What it says here in verse 44, everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalm. The Old Testament speaks about the gospel, but he also is telling them about, he also says, you're going to be witnesses.

It's going to be gospel you can find out about in the Old Testament and from you guys. And it is from these witnesses that form the New Testament writings. And lastly, we hear about a double sending, a sending of the Holy Spirit to us and the sending of us out into the world.

Okay, that was a little bit staccato, I know, but I wondered if you noticed that the truths were kind of doublets. Blip, blip, blip, blip, blip, blip. Repentance, forgiveness, Jerusalem, the world, Old Testament, New Testament, two sendings, death and resurrection.

[21 : 13] Why doublets? I don't know. John Stott, who has passed away recently, is an Anglican minister and scholar.

He reckoned that it was, we only mention this because it's kind of, it jumps out, you know. He reckons that it's in here because the church has this fatal tendency to imbalance.

You know, we emphasize one aspect of the truth over another. You know, missions over the work of the Holy Spirit or Old Testament over New Testament. And thank you by the way, no one has complained about how long we've been in the Old Testament unlike some services at St. John's. Hopefully you've learnt that, you know, the gospel is all through the Bible. So anyway, John Stott reckons that the doublets are there to counter our tendency to kind of, you know, go more in one direction than the other.

I'm not sure. I think it's, to finish up, what I want to do is just going to step back and look at this whole thing at 10,000 feet. So Christ turned up in the midst of a very disoriented group of people.

[22 : 25] And as one commentator put it, really succinctly and beautifully, I thought, he says, one, he goes, he answers the questions of their mind. They're thinking, is it really him?

And he says, yes, it's really me. Touch me. See me. He answers the questions of their mind. Two, he answers the desires of their heart. He does this by eating with them, you know, because there would have been a great sense of abandonment and loss, a great sense of grief.

He answers the desires of their heart by eating with them and saying, I'm not only here, I'm with you. I'm with you. And lastly, he reorients their life around an unchanging gospel by commissioning them to be witnesses to everything they've seen.

Now to finish off, let me spend just two minutes reflecting on these, on these aspects of this passage. Jesus responds to the questions of their minds.

Three real questions they had about, is this really him? So can I ask you, do you have questions and doubts in your mind about the historicity of Christ?

[23 : 41] And are you embarrassed by those? Do you feel ashamed of those? Can I just urge you not to ignore those things? Not to ignore your doubts, pretend they're not there.

Don't shovel them way back in your mind. Just let the doubts do what they're supposed to do. Let them take you deeper into your faith. I want you to explore your doubts through carefully reflecting on them and seek out answers for them.

And the reason I think that's really important to do because a faith that is not tested can easily collapse at the first great hurdle that life throws at it.

And this hurdle could be a family tragedy or perhaps it could be a really engaging humanist professor at university. So don't be embarrassed or ashamed about these doubts.

I mean, it seems to me that Christ invited his disciples to deal with fears when he appeared to them. Secondly, he answers the desires of their heart. What I'd like to say here is that it's really important to make your relationship with Jesus personal and not just philosophical.

[25 : 06] The reason I say this is because that's what a relationship should be. But very practically, your heart you know, your heart drives your will, right?

And a faith that does not have its heart engaged, that heart will give itself to the first suitor that comes along and does engage it.

And when I think about my friends who have walked away from the faith, it is almost always a boyfriend or a girlfriend who has engaged their hearts in such a way that Jesus never did. And it wasn't Christ's fault. So make your relationship with Jesus personal and not just philosophical. And lastly, very quickly, Christ sets their life in a new direction.

Can I just say that this is a process, not an event. Don't beat yourself up if you don't feel too, you know, too into Jesus.

[26 : 17] Just make it a daily prayer that God would just reorient your hearts. I pray this all the time. God, reorient my heart. Continually do this work.

It's not a punctilious thing, you know. It's a process. It's a process. And that's that. Amen. Come on. Come and pray for us, mate.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.