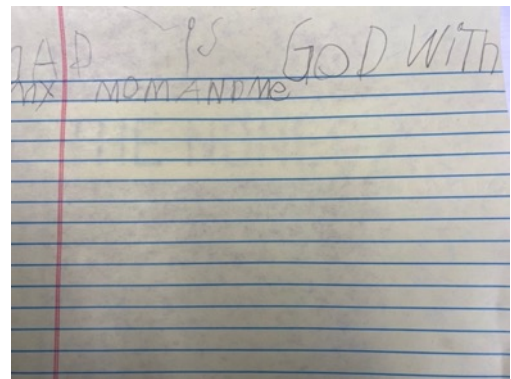


Sometimes in life, things surprise us – right? Ever been surprised? Maybe good, maybe bad, maybe funny, maybe sad. Last Saturday, I found myself wearing a sparkly, light-up, purple cowboy hat (**photo here**). That was VERY surprising and I can’t believe I’m sharing this with you all. No, I was not at a country music concert: I was supporting my daughter and her Lake Washington high school dance team at their state championship dance competition. A parent’s love will make you do surprising things.



But that’s not all. A few days ago, our youngest son, JD, came to me with a sentence he had written out on his own and he wanted me to read it. Here’s what he wrote, “Dad is God with my mom and me.” 😬

I kid you not, that’s exactly what it said. **Here’s the photo, for proof.** Talk about surprising, right? He’s a pastor’s kid! While his handwriting is pretty good, you have to read slowly. So, when I deciphered the first statement “Dad is God” my mind began processing at a gazillion miles per hour. I thought, “Terrible theology/we need to have a talk/but JD thinks pretty highly of me/that’s kind of cool.” 😊 Then as I continued to the word “with” I’m like, “With?”



Who could JD *possibly* have on this same level with me?” 😂 Then I read “with my mom” and I’m like, “well, ok...that’s probably fair.” 😬 Then I read that it’s “with my mom and me.” And I’m like, “We got problems. But, although it’s out of order: He’s got the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! That’s great theology stated in the most heretical way ever!” Now, I read it out loud and it turns out he was trying to write, “Dad is *good* with my mom and me.” My ego was quickly deflated...and we had a quick lesson on the importance of spelling words correctly and staying in school.

Now: More significantly surprising things happen all the time – some good, some not. A flat tire, job loss, a medical diagnosis, death, famine, war, the doctor telling you it's twins, new job, a promotion, the Mariners being picked to win the A.L. West. Surprises happen all the time. And: **The resurrection of Jesus was, to the disciples, surprising.** They did not see this coming. As some of you know, the biographies of Jesus that we know as the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)...they record for us that after Jesus' death, the disciples stuck together and huddled up; they were fearful of "guilt by association" and might be crucified as well.

So, the news of the resurrection was brought to them by women who had also been Jesus' followers, and who went to take care of Jesus' body in their customary way with oils and spices. But instead of a dead body, they encountered the empty tomb and the risen Jesus. So, they went to tell the disciples who were huddled up in the room where they'd eaten the Passover meal with Jesus a few nights earlier. You see, no one was expecting this. And yet, in today's passage Paul writes these words: **"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).** They knew the Scriptures...but didn't see this coming!

Paul writes of two things that happen "according to the Scriptures." In other words, according to the Old Testament (Jewish Bible for them); that was "the Scriptures" to them. **First, was Jesus' death for sins.** There are lots of Old Testament passages that foretell of death for sins. The four Gospels reference a number of them. There are verses in Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12, for instance. Those are fairly obvious and easy connections to the Old Testament Scriptures that are fulfilled by Jesus' death. They were surprised, though, because they were expecting the Messiah to come with merged spiritual and political power, but emphasize political power...and the Messiah leading them to victory over political forces (the Romans) to establish a new earthly Kingdom. That's not the way of Jesus, however. So, Jesus' death was surprising.

Second, notice Paul also writes also that “...he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” (1 Cor. 15:4). So, Paul sees something in the Old Testament that foreshadows and points to Jesus’ resurrection on the third day. Interestingly, there isn’t really an OT passage that talks about a person, let alone the Messiah, being raised to new life on the third day. This is not, however, because the idea of rising to new life or new hope being raised up on the third day is not found anywhere in the Old Testament. Actually, it turns out, it’s everywhere. **There are refrains ringing throughout the Old Testament of God bringing life out of death, and hope out of despair, “on the third day.”**

For instance, life springs forth from the earth on the third day of Creation in the Old Testament (Genesis 1). Whether you believe the days of Creation are literal or metaphorical is irrelevant: the language of days is used to convey that the Universe did not self-create, we are not accidents...that there is a creator God, and that on the third day, new life – specifically plant-life like trees and shrubs – comes forth out of the dirt of the earth. These plants bear fruit, which carry the seed for life to continue to come forth.

And from there, we see seeds sown throughout Scripture that bring forth life “on the third day” – whether that’s the third day of a week, or a month or the third day after an event. For instance, in Genesis 22 we read about Isaac, Abraham’s son who is destined for death on Mount Moriah: his life is spared and given new life – when? – *on the third day*. King Hezekiah, who is deathly ill at the start of 2 Kings 20, is then given new life – when? – *on the third day*; Jonah is given a new start and new life – when? – *on the third day* (Jonah 1:17); Joseph’s brothers are given a reprieve from death – when? – *on the third day* (Genesis 42:18); The people of Israel are dying of thirst as they wander in the desert, but are given life-saving fresh water – when? – *on the third day* (Exodus 15:22-25); When the Israelites arrive at the base of Mt Sinai, they are told to prepare for the Lord who will come down to meet them – when? – *on the third day* (Exodus 19:11); Queen Esther, who saves her Jewish people from extinction, makes her plea with the king when she enters his court – when? – *on the third day* (Esther 5:1).

So, God frequently moves “on the third day” of a week, a month, or after an event. And: **On the third day of Jesus’ death – he was dead on Friday, Saturday was a whole second day, and then on the third day, Sunday – God once again brought forth new life.** And like the others, it’s surprising. It surprised the disciples, and it still surprises us. This is the resurrection power of God: to bring forth life out of death; to bring dreams out of despair; to bring light out of darkness; to bring forth health out of sickness; to bring joy out of grieving; to bring love out of hate. For instance, the apostle Paul, as he writes in this passage (and elsewhere, plus more of this in the Book of Acts): he goes from persecuting Christians to joining them! He was as surprised at the resurrection power of God as *anyone*, but by the time he writes this letter, he has come to see Jesus’ resurrection connected to the Scriptures.

I want to share with you a true story of a group of 8-year-olds who received the Good News of the resurrection into their life, and the surprising impact it had on them. This comes from July of 1985, from a man named Harry Pritchett. He writes, “Once upon a time I had a young friend named Philip. Philip was born with Down syndrome. He was a pleasant child — happy, it seemed — but increasingly aware of the difference between himself and other children. His [Sunday School] teacher, also a friend of mine, taught the third-grade class with Philip and nine other eight-year-old boys and girls. Philip, with his differences, was not readily accepted. But my teacher friend was creative, and he helped the group of eight-year-olds. They learned, they laughed, they played together. And they really cared about one another. My teacher friend could see it. He also knew that Philip was not really a part of that group.

My friend had a marvelous idea for his class the Sunday after Easter last year. You know those things that pantyhose come in — the containers that look like great big eggs — my friend had collected ten of them. [Anyone remember the “L’eggs” brand of pantyhose and their egg-shaped containers? I looked this week to see if they still use those and they don’t. Two weeks ago, I never dreamed I would do “pantyhose container research” 😂. Talk about surprising!] Each child got one, and the assignment was to go outside, find a symbol for new life, put it into the egg, and bring it back to the

classroom.

They ran all around the church grounds, gathered their symbols, and returned to the classroom. They put all the eggs on a table, and then the teacher began to open them. He opened one, and there was a flower. He opened another, and there was a little butterfly. My teacher friend opened the next one. There was nothing there. The other children, as eight-year-olds will, said, "That's not fair — that's stupid! — somebody didn't do right." Then my teacher friend felt a tug on his shirt. Philip was standing beside him. "It's mine," Philip said. And the children said, "You don't ever do things right, Philip. There's nothing there!" "I did so do it," Philip said. "I did do it. It's empty. *The tomb is empty!*" There was silence, a very full silence.

And for you people who don't believe in miracles, I want to tell you that one happened that day last spring. From that time on, it was different. Philip suddenly became a part of that group of eight-year old children. They took him in. He was set free from the tomb of his differentness."¹

In that special moment, those kids realized that the resurrection changes everything. God's resurrection power was made real even in their lives right then. They realized the sin in their lives in the way they treated Philip. And so, they received the Good News – that Jesus died for our sin according to the scriptures, buried, and was raised to new life according to the Scriptures, and they began to make that the foundation for how they lived in that classroom – to treat Philip as a child of God, created in God's image. God's surprising resurrection power had changed them. I hope you know God's resurrection power in your life. It is surprising. Even for us believers, it's still surprising, and probably more so if you're skeptical about Jesus. But there's a seed that's been planted – perhaps earlier in your life, perhaps just today...and God can work with that seed to grow it and bring new life out of it. **Perhaps today you would like to put your trust in Jesus and know in your life the surprising resurrection power of God.**

I want to close by finishing up the story about Philip, because there's more to his story, just as there's more to Jesus' story than His death and burial. Harry Pritchett writes, "[Philip's] family had known since the time he was born that

he wouldn't live out a full life span. Many other things had been wrong with his tiny body. And so, late last July, with an infection that most normal children could have quickly shrugged off, Philip died.

At the funeral, nine eight-year-old children marched up to the altar, not with flowers to cover the stark reality of death. Nine eight-year-olds, with their Sunday school teacher, marched right up to that altar, and laid on it an empty, old, discarded pantyhose egg.”² The resurrection changed Philip's life, and through him changed the lives of those nine 8-year-olds. And it's all because Christ is risen, and the tomb is empty. **That's the power of the resurrection – to bring life out of death; Here and now, and into eternity.** It's not a power you or I possess on our own: A 6-year-old's mis-spelled “good” so it reads “God” does not make it true. We don't have this power. Only God does. And the Scriptures tell us about it: that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and then was raised to new life. This is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. It's of first importance, as Paul writes, and it's what God invites us to believe. And so, I pray you know this death-defeating, eternity impacting, miracle-working, “on the third day,” surprising resurrection power in your life through faith in Jesus Christ. I also pray that through you, like little Philip, wherever you are, that his surprising resurrection power would change others as well. Let's Pray... Amen.

¹ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1985/summer/8513113.html>

² Ibid.