

THOUGHTS

By Douglas W. Schroeder

SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY

HERE IT COMES – THE WORD TODAY’S 40TH ANNIVERSARY!

We are on the cusp of our celebration of four decades of God’s blessing to The Word Today! We hope you can join us at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, Greendale, Wisconsin, for the “official” anniversary weekend, May 5th at the 6pm service, and May 6th at the 8am and 10:30am services. After the late service on Sunday we will have a catered meal. *Please contact the church office to let us know you will be attending so we can get a proper count for the meal.* We will be bringing the anniversary offering for support of The Word Today that morning as well.

In addition, we invite you to a second weekend of celebration, one just as full of joy, as we welcome Ralf Stores, Global Media Services Director for Trans World Radio, and Juliet Oponng-Amoako, Media Services Director for South Africa, who will be joining us from Johannesburg, South Africa! We will also have a light lunch that day, and we invite you to join us for that as well.

We have so much to praise God for and anticipated blessings in the future for The Word Today! We hope that you can celebrate with us in person. If you are prevented, we thank you for your dedicated support through your gifts and your prayers of thanks!

THE JOY OF EASTER!

It is supposed to be cold, and perhaps even snowy, this Easter here. But, that should not dampen our enthusiasm for Christ! One of the great ways we can show our spiritual effervescence is to be “up” in the face of things that get the world down. We have a Savior who has conquered death for us! We have an assurance that we are forgiven and heading toward Heaven! We have the comfort of knowing that as the angel pointed (I presume) to the empty tomb and said, “He is not here,” we are reassured that Jesus will come again!

The older we get the more we pay attention to people dying. I often use Pastor Paul’s reminder in the face of calamity, “We do not have a crisis! A crisis is facing (fill in the blank) without the Lord, Jesus.” Amen! We are forgiven, redeemed people of God. We are servants of the Lord Jesus, who defeated sin and death. So, whatever the Lord deems for us to undergo is good and for our eternal welfare. That’s living with Easter confidence and joy!

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN, YET BELIEVE.”

Those are the words of Jesus, which it is important to note, were spoken *after* his resurrection from the dead. In that same account of “doubting Thomas,” that faithful Christians know well, John summarizes about the numerous miracles and sayings of Christ he compiled into his Gospel, “... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (see John 20:24-31).”

Humans do a lot of doubting! Especially in this Internet generation where we are bombarded with all manner of fake, conflated, perpetrated, and fabricated news, advertisements and come-ons, suspicion runs high. Add to that the new cult of worship of “Science”, and you have the makings of a public high on skepticism. Faith need not apply.

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Thoughts
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*The Bible is God's Word . . . Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh . . .
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

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It can be terribly difficult to convince a skeptic of the truth. Some people operate from the principle that if I can't conceive of it and haven't experienced it, I won't believe it. John wrote a thoroughly researched eyewitness account with much more rigor than most news articles today! *It should be taken at face value.*

When you run into a Skeptic who is hard set against the Bible – just smile. Your bluster for the Lord won't change them. Let the Holy Spirit do that over time and through the experiences of their life which need to break their rocky resistance. Showing them love will win more points than a doctrinal smack down. We believe, and are blessed, even though we have not seen the resurrected Lord. Those doubting others, like Thomas; give them time, and smile.

PROSPERITY GOSPEL FALLING ON HARD TIMES?

I recently finished the book Everything Happens for a Reason, and Other Lies That I Have Loved by Kate Bowler. It's poignant and candid, but not very therapeutic for someone seeking strengthening in their faith while facing death. Kate hits all the emotional aspects of dying – she has an incurable cancer and faces it with openness and hope. But, this professor of divinity at Duke barely scratches the surface of the Scripture when it comes to making her good confession. I wish I could say that this dying woman's final breaths would breathe new life into the spiritually listless, but it will mostly help people avoid a few social faux pas.

The book is good, however, in that she reveals the hollow promise of the "Prosperity Gospel," a bankrupt form of Christianity for people with either enormous egos, desperate hopes to get more, or both. The examples of carcinogenic church behavior skewed toward wealth and happiness is a good warning to stay away from such preachers and congregations, as they cannot deliver on the promises they hold forth. The typical Christian life is not from glory to glory, but a combination of gory and glorious moments in anticipation of the Greater Glory to come.

WHAT GREAT MOVIES!

The movie "I Can Only Imagine," is fantastic! It is a beautiful true life account of Brent Dillard, lead singer of the group Mercy Me. He was physically abused as a child by his father. I won't spoil the movie, but it is about redemption – and you need to see it! Trust me, it's well worth your time and money! If you missed it at the theater, check for it on Netflix in due time.

Other movies I have not yet seen, but look promising, are "Paul, Apostle of Christ," and "God's Not Dead III". This seems to be a great season for film watching for believers! Finally, we are seeing very high quality films. For decades Christian film makers had shoestring budgets and hopes that their films would be supported. Finally, a winning strategy has been found, wherein the films run only several days as opposed to booking theaters for longer runs. That way the film makers can make good on their expenses and efforts, and the movie can be extended without fear of fiscal calamity. How wonderful! We owe it to them to see their work, and we owe it to God to have fresh faith, one informed by good film making and cultural relevance.

Correction to March THOUGHTS: Zerubbabel, not Hezekiah, was the civil leader of the Jews overseeing the reconstruction of the temple following the Babylonian captivity.

Blessings!
Douglas W. Schroeder

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