

OUR FRIEND FOREVER
Jesus, Our Friend
Dr. George O. Wood

Three different passages from the New Testament. First Matthew 28, the John 20, then Romans 10. We've already read the first 28 verses of Matthew which describes the earthquake, the angel coming down and the soldiers being frightened, the stone being rolled away and the women coming to the tomb. With that backdrop, I just want to read Matthew 28:11-14. "While the women were going, behold some of the guards went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. When they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel they gave a sum of money to the soldiers and said, 'Tell people his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep. If this comes to the governor's ear we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.'"

Then John 20:1-9 "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.' Peter then came out with the other disciple and they went toward the tomb. They both ran but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. Stooping to look in he saw the linen cloth lying there but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb and he saw the linen cloth lying and the napkin which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloth but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the scripture that he must rise from the dead."

Finally Romans 10:9-10 "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. For man believes with his heart..."

Why is it some receive the Easter message and believe it? And others do not. The essential claim of Easter of course is that Jesus the carpenter from Nazareth has risen from the dead. Whether you accept that claim or not Jesus is still one of the most monumental persons in history. From the Christian point of view, the most monumental. From the non-Christian point of view, monumental. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives some 20,000 plus words to their article on the person of Jesus Christ. Outranking in space the attention given to Aristotle, Cicero, Julius Caesar and Napoleon among others. Jesus we recognize as a monumental person. Why is it that some disbelieve and others believe?

From a surface point of view I think it's rather easy to see some leading features why Jesus may not be received within our society and culture, within human kind. At least in terms of the objections to the Easter message, I hear on the surface level I would dare isolate for just moment although there are many more I would at least isolate three key reasons intellectually why Easter is not received.

One reason may be that it is in our day a natural tendency to discount something that is miraculous. Quite clearly the Easter story is a miraculous story. There has never been a miracle like this. After crucifixion and three days in the tomb, he came forth. No wonder if one starts out with the predisposition to disregard the miraculous, the story of Jesus' resurrection is a real stumbling block.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

I don't have that natural tendency to discount the miraculous because of things that have happened in my own life to make me aware that God indeed does work in signs and wonders. Simply because one doesn't see the miraculous doesn't mean one should discount it.

Another reason why Easter is frequently dismissed is that of its antiquity. It happened so long ago. Why should anything that happened that long ago have any significance for us today? But simply because something happened long ago does not make it myth. Simply because it is ancient history does not mean it is not history. Simply because we were not eyewitnesses to it does not then disestablish the fact.

Another reason I hear for discounting the Easter message is that after all, all religion is subjective. It depends upon your feelings. People say religion is a crutch. I don't need anything. I feel ok without it. Or Christians say "I feel that Jesus has changed my life," and we wind up with feelings compared to feelings. Is there anyway out of the subjective trap so that one person's feelings serve to be different than another. Often the Easter message is disbelieved because it is simply regarded as a competing message among other world religion messages.

How then do we verify truth? How do we get out of the subjective trap into the world of real reality? Obviously we do that through two methods. One is the scientific method, which involves repeatable events. You throw a ball up in the air so many times and after awhile establish that there is such a thing as the law of gravity. For non-repeatable events – they can't be established by a law of science but by an eyewitness. We depend upon eyewitnesses and when there are no longer eyewitnesses we depend upon the written documents they leave behind to establish the fact. It is by the way a fact of history that by the year 64 A.D. some slightly over 30 years following Christ's crucifixion and resurrection the gospel of Jesus Christ had spread to such enormous proportions that thousands of miles away in the capital city of Rome without the advantage of telegraph or telephone or modern means of conveyance the Christian community within thirty years was so strong that they attracted the attention of the emperor who blamed them for a fire in Rome and initiated their persecution.

When we look at Easter from an historical point of view we begin to see evidences that are incredible.

What does God ask us to do in regard to Easter? He asks us to reach out in faith and to believe? How do you believe? Many people feel faith is something that's kind of a stab in the dark. To have faith is somewhat like Russian roulette. You choose a religion and you hope it works. How can you be sure in regard to faith?

Suppose I was out in the street and you were walking down the street and as you came up to me I open my coat and whipped out a hamburger. It was a quarter-pound hamburger with cheese and pickle, lettuce and tomato and a little bit of sauce. Then I open my coat on the other side and whip out a coke. I said, "I'll sell this hamburger to you for 79 cents and the coke for 20. Skip the tax." What do you think you would do? You wouldn't buy that hamburger. You wouldn't buy that coke. You don't know who I am. If I were well dressed, you would be suspicious. "What's that well dressed guy out there selling this to me?" If I were poorly dressed you'd be suspicious because you'd think, "What has he put into it? What kind of kook is this out on the street?" You would not buy because you do not have any evidences which show me to be a

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

credible person whom you can trust and when you eat the hamburger you are taking your life in your hands. So you will only buy it from credible people. That's why when you're out on the street you don't buy a hamburger from a stranger. You go to where the arches are! And for better or for worse you get what they have to offer. Because over a period of time it's been established that five hundred billion hamburgers have not killed anybody. You have reason to believe and because you have reason to believe you take the step of faith.

That in a simple form is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. Jesus does not appear to us as one without credentials nor do his disciples. But they appear to us as persons with credentials. And based on those credentials and those evidences we are called to take steps of faith.

What can be verified about Jesus? Incontestably verified. Certainly these things can be verified. He lived. He was crucified. He was buried. He was preached raised from the dead. About that there is no doubt. Those who first proclaimed the message believed that he had risen from the dead. One does not have to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ to believe that he was preached raised. He was preached raised. Everyone can agree upon that no matter what standpoint they have in regard to the gospels. Persecution accompanies the initial preaching of that message that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

Another incontestable fact related to Jesus is that the tomb was empty. The missing body of Jesus is an historical fact. Can you imagine the early Christian apostles standing up to preach that he had risen from the dead only to have in the middle of their sermon, interrupted by someone walking in with a corpse identified by the nail prints as Jesus of Nazareth. In but a moment of time the whole preaching of the resurrection would have been dashed to the ground. The fact of history is that somehow and some way the body of Jesus was absent from the tomb. There have been all sorts of speculations throughout these twenty centuries as to how that tomb became empty. But rather than going down through all the various theories I want to just indicate to you why we can know that the witnesses were telling the truth. When they said the tomb was empty because he had risen.

What are the evidences, which lead us to that particular understanding? There are a million of them but I will isolate on eight.

First of all by temperament and by training. The disciples were not men of disposition to create a religion. They were former fishermen. One was a tax collector. Another one was a political revolutionary. The other five we do not know what particular occupations they were involved in. But the other five, except for Matthew neither write a gospel. They were not literary agents. They were not persons who had taken graduate courses in philosophy and theology and decided that what the world needed was a new religion and they were going to offer the world now a religion. Religions by the way, never begin by committees anyway. If these persons had been responsible for foisting Christianity upon the world then we'd almost have to say that Christianity is the only religion ever begun by a committee.

By temperament and training one detects simplicity in their lives. One detects as you read the gospels and give it true attention that you're hearing the story of men who have come across a truth that is greater than they ever imagined, that they could have intellectually thought of, that they could have perceived. In temperament and training they were not meant to create a new religion.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

The second reason why the witnesses are telling the truth is that their lives themselves are radically changed by the Easter message.

We see them before the crucifixion and at the crucifixion as persons who are afraid. We find them away from Christ in his hour of need. But when they know that he is risen from the dead their fear is transformed into boldness. They speak with authority.

One thing that makes me realize how radically changed their lives are is the level of honesty that comes through in their experience. It's incredible. You can tell if a person is telling the truth by whether or not he is willing to talk about the times in his life when he has been weak. The disciples are not hesitant at all to discuss with us in the gospels the moments in life in which they have made bad mistakes. They never attempt to "watergate" themselves and present themselves as the kind of individual who are incapable of error. Besides it was not the empty tomb, which changed the personality of the disciples. It was the risen Lord that changed their personality. An empty tomb would have only made them question. An empty tomb would have only made them ponder. An empty tomb would only have led them to maybe a metaphysical society to ask questions. But the empty tomb raises questions the risen Lord answers the questions. Their lives have been changed by an encounter with the risen Christ.

A third reason why they are telling the truth is they first proclaimed their message in Jerusalem. What's so unique about that? Because it's Jerusalem where the crucifixion happened and they were from Galilee. The masses of Galilee had always been with Jesus. There's where he had drawn his crowds. There they were more susceptible to faith. And just like often one can go into the countryside and find people believing more in fables and myths and old wives tales than in the urban area, it is in Galilee that perhaps the message of the resurrection would have in initially reached its greatest hearing. If they had wanted to snow job somebody then they might have started in Galilee where at least the chances were greater. But they started in Jerusalem where the evidence was there. He was crucified and they preached and proclaimed there.

A fourth reason why the witnesses were telling the truth is that Christianity, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the only world religion that ever got off the ground by claiming that its founder had risen from the dead. If you've had a course in comparative religions one of the things you do is look at what each religion has in common. But so often the comparative religions idea fails to distinguish that what is unique about a religion is not what it has in common with everything but what makes it different. The thing that makes the gospel of Jesus Christ so totally different than any other view is that here is a faith which is predicated upon a personal action from its leader. If he did not rise from the dead then the whole faith goes down the drain as Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians.

The fifth reason why the disciples are telling the truth is each faced persecution without a denial. If you have listened to a prisoner of war you can imagine some of the kinds of pressures that were brought on him as a prisoner of war to make him crack. Why didn't he? Because the thing inside him was greater than the pressure outside of him. And no matter how great the pressure was outside it could never crack the thing inside him because the Spirit is stronger.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

When the Christians of the first century, when the witnesses of Jesus Christ faced the choice Christ or the lions, Christ or Caesar there was never a hesitation about who it would be. Because Caesar would die but Jesus lives.

Another reason why the witnesses were telling the truth is a kind of unusual element in the gospels. How much the word “joy” enters the text of the gospels. In each of the gospels the word “joy” or “gladness”. It is a word you would not expect to find if the tale were being made up. It is too natural a term. It is too reflective of how they actually felt. “With great joy!”

Another thing which makes me realize the witnesses are telling the truth is that their witness is validated in personal experience today. What they experienced we experience. The freedom from sin and guilt and condemnation is also available for us and experienced by us.

There is this additional element which lets us know the witnesses are telling the truth. That is this: insistence on moral purity without basic honesty is untenable. If you want a faith, which talks about purity, about honesty, about morals, then it is the gospel of Jesus Christ. To assume that that whole element of love and light and honesty and holiness and character is founded upon a basic unmitigated, preplanned false advertising, false concept. To assume that all of that is built on a lie is to presume that psychologically these men who followed Jesus were the most schizophrenic personalities that ever walked on the planet earth.

One thing that makes me know that they are true is never do they resort to force to defend their belief. Do you see that in the New Testament? You will never find a Christian persecuting. You will always find the Christian following the example of Christ who for the sake of faith can only witness and share but never defend. The gospel cannot be built by violent means. Had it been a lie there would have been the temptation to associate with all of the other ill things that go with lies. But there was truth.

In light of these things what is it that keeps a person from believing in the resurrection and why did some believe? The story is told for us extremely well in the gospels. The first person in the gospels to believe in the resurrection of Jesus and we also see the first persons to disbelieve the resurrection. Why does one believe and the other disbelieve? To see this this week and being a student of the New Testament for this long and never seen it before has just amazed me. But I’ve seen something this week which has stirred me as almost nothing else has ever.

I find as I read the gospel of John, the story of two men – Peter and the other disciple whom we know as John – who are brought in the early Easter morning the news by Mary Magdalene that the body of Jesus is missing from the grave. So they both run. John being the faster of the two arrives at the tomb first. In verse 5 it is noted that he stooped to look in but he himself did not go in. He simply sees as he looks in and *saw* the linen cloth lying. Then it says Peter came after him and he went into the sepulcher. He didn’t bother to stand on the outside. He went in. The first man in the sepulcher. And he also saw. The second use of the word “saw.” He saw the linen clothes lying and the napkin, which had been about his head not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then finally verse says the other disciple – John – went in and he saw and believed. Three times the verb “saw” is used – verse 5, 6, 8.

First of all John simply did a quick look, sort of like a peep hole look and saw that the tomb was empty – saw the cloths there but made nothing of it. Peter rushed in and he got a closer look. He

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

saw that the clothes were as if they had been emptied. They were like a cocoon lying there – just the outward shell. Here had been no disturbance of the grave clothes. They were just there rolled up. Just as if the body had been in it then all of a sudden had vaporized out of the body. Then a third time the word “saw” is used and this time John goes in and he saw and believed.

In the English, these words “saw” are all the same, but in the language in which the New Testament is written it required three different words in the Greek to express what is happening in that moment.

The first verb, John simply looks in and it’s a casual look. Then Peter goes in and he has a more observing look. He sees actually what the components of that tomb consist of. But then finally John goes in and he has the deeper look. He has the comprehending look. In that moment he believed.

Why does he believe? He has not seen Jesus. He has not seen an angel. An angel has not talked to him. And John tells us as yet that he didn’t even yet know the scriptures that Christ must rise. So why did he believe?

He believed because he used his logic. He said there are only three possibilities for these grave clothes being his way.

One possibility is someone stole him. But if they stole him they wouldn’t have left the tomb like this.

The second possibility is one of us would have taken him. But we have not have done that to his body by taking his naked body out of the tomb and besides we wouldn’t have sprung him from the grave clothes like this.

There is only one option John said. He is risen. The only way he could have gotten out of these grave clothes was that he rose. So using his mind he says “I believe.” She is the first to believe the resurrection.

Why does he believe? Because he believes on the basis of the evidences.

Incredibly though there are some others who know that the resurrection has happened but they do not believe. Their story is told in the 28th chapter Matthew, verses 11-14. These are the chief priests and the elders. You can imagine the picture. The guards come running in to where the chief priests and the elders are and the guards are trembling. They have been at the scene of an earthquake. The epicenter of the most magnificent thing you could ever imagine. They were there with the ground shook. They were there when the angel descended. They were there to see the angel roll back the stone. If they were till conscious they heard the angel say, “He is risen. He is not here.” Breathless, trembling, ashen-faced they come into where the religious leaders are. They bring the story of what happened. In that moment the religious leadership intellectually knew he is risen.

But what did they do with it? The story of Matthew’s gospel is they chose not to believe. Why? The first person to disbelieve the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not disbelieve with his head but with his heart.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

That is one of the most critical distinctions I think I have ever seen in the gospels. The first person to disbelieve the resurrection disbelieved not with his head but with his heart.

How do I arrive at that? What is the heart?

We know that the heart is the center of our feelings. Our emotions, our will. It's what makes us, *us*. We see that when Jesus ministered in his earthly ministry that continually he was addressing the religious opposition, that he was warning them about their hardness of heart. Why was he doing that? Because over a period of time they were hardening themselves to the gospel.

I have been a person who has put a great deal of confidence in a logical approach to Christianity because it was through a logical approach initially that I began to trust the Lord Jesus Christ. But I have been frustrated in my own life as I've shared the logical approach with others and said, Now do you see? There are grounds to believe. Only to walk away from that experience so depressed and feeling within because I have felt that as clearly as possible I had made a case for the gospel only to find the gospel refused. Often for some very poor and unworthy motivations. I wondered why is this so. It dawned on me here in the gospel record that the persons who had the greatest evidences in the world of Jesus being raised from the dead, the persons who had the greatest evidences, still disbelieved with their heart.

How does your heart become hardened so that you don't believe the good news of Easter?

I want to explain to you why it was that a person does not believe. I found the explanation in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. It is three days before Jesus' death. He's talking to the religious leaders who would put him to death and who would later disbelieve the gospel story. He tells them here's why you have not believed. If you want to know what it's like to disbelieve in your heart then Matthew 23 is the place to begin. There are six conditions. I'll briefly relate them.

The first condition is in verses 1-3. Knowledge without action. Jesus said, You preach but you do not practice. When we first run across the religious leaders in the gospels we find them at the court of Herod. The wise men come and say, "Where is he that is to be born king of the Jews?" and the scribes right away get out the Bible. They know where the prophecy is. It's in Micah. He's to be born in Bethlehem. That's where he's to be born. But what do they do with the knowledge that they had? They did nothing. The wise men acted on the knowledge and went to Bethlehem. But the religious leaders sat on their knowledge. If a person over a period of time does not act on the light that he has what gradually becomes to occur is an intellectualization of his faith. An endless asking of questions why? Why is the inner motive?

They had knowledge without action.

Secondly, in verse 4, they were more demanding on others than on themselves. Jesus said, "If you lay heavy burdens on others and you yourselves will not help them bear their burden." How many critics of the Easter story, how many critics of Christianity would say, "I couldn't give my life to Jesus Christ because that person doesn't do this or that person doesn't do that." What they want to do unfortunately is lay some heavy burden on someone else that they themselves will not carry. A judgmental sort of an attitude.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

Why is another reason for the hardening of the heart, a self-centeredness creeps out in the religious leadership. Verses 5-11. "You love your dress," Jesus says, "You love your chief places. You love your titles, the Reverend this and the Doctor that and the Most Holy this and the rabbi that and all you're looking for is prestige. You're on an ego trip instead of turning your life over to God." Incredibly this is true. To the extent that you become unselfish, to that extent you will see the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There's another extent, which we could go to. These persons were immoral in their behavior. One of the variant readings of the text of Matthew 23 we find them as being described as persons who defraud widows. Then Jesus flatly tells them you don't have justice, mercy or faith. What is it that keeps a person from coming to Jesus Christ? So often it is not uncertainty as to evidences but it is moral sin within.

Another thing that Jesus points out in verses 25-28 is secret sin in the lives of those whose heart is hardened. Secret sin. He says "You wash the outside of the cup and the plate but inside they are full of rapacity. He says "You decorate the tombs. You white wash them. But inside they are full of all manner of uncleanness."

What is Jesus saying? He's saying that if in your life there is secret sins, in your life if there are things which are unconfessed, things which you carry, things which you carry which you've never brought to the foot of Jesus at the cross. If you're carrying this then to the degree that you're carrying it, to that degree you will not see the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because it is the pure in heart who see God.

Finally in the religious leadership there was a hatred of the truth, which eventuates in killing the prophets. These persons over a period of ministry of Jesus' life had grown so cold when even Lazarus rose from the dead they did not rejoice in the Lord but instead turned against him and sought to kill him.

Now when Jesus himself is risen from the dead they did not believe it. Why? Not because they intellectually can't understand it but because with their heart they do not believe.

I have wondered why it was that Jesus never appeared to those who did not believe after his resurrection. Why was it that he appeared only to the disciples, to the five hundred who knew him? Wouldn't it have been a wonderful thing if the Sanhedrin were sitting in its meeting and talking about the events that had happened and wondering about all these stories and all of a sudden Jesus Christ himself were standing in their midst and say, "Here are my hands and here are my feet and here is my side. You killed me but God raised me up."

I thought wouldn't that be wonderful. But then I began to realize from the text of the gospel what was wrong. The reason why they didn't believe the message of the resurrection was not because they didn't know it was true they knew it was true. The reason why they didn't believe was because their hearts were wrong. And even a personal appearance by the Lord Jesus Christ would not change their hearts. It might cause their knees to bow. Indeed we're told in revelation where there will come a day when every knee shall bow but for many that will be a forced servitude. The final thing where all men confess.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

This is very heavy upon my heart. I have recognized in this gospel story a dimension to the gospel message that I never saw before. A dimension that is possibly keeping you from believing in the resurrection if you do not believe. A dimension which says the reason you do not believe is not that God hasn't acted. He's given you all the evidences. The reason why you don't believe is within you. That's why Paul says in Romans 10:9 "Of you believe in your heart that he has risen you shall be saved. For man believes with his heart..." As Jesus has said, "This is the judgment that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes the light that it may clearly be seen that his deeds are wrought in God." Saint Paul said, "Those without Jesus Christ are darkened without understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is within them due to the hardness of their heart." Why are they alienated from God? Because of their ignorance. Why are they ignorant? Because of hardness of heart.

The problem is not intellectual. If it were it would be so easy to solve. The problem is deeper. It is the age-old problem of rebellion and sin and refusal to understand and accept and act upon God's gracious word of pardon. That's why the cross comes before the resurrection. Because the cross speaks not to our head but to our heart.

Have you ever thought about that? I have wrestled with the text praying, "Lord, I want to explain why you died and didn't choose any other way. I want to plum the depths. I want to understand the mystery." Every time I come away have analogy to use but never knowing why God didn't choose another way and never really intellectualizing it out deeply enough for my own satisfaction. That's why Saint Paul says the preaching of the cross is folly to those who intellectualize. If you want to do something more than intellectualize, if you want to believe in your heart then this happens when you come to the cross. Your heart is there. And when your heart believes then you head can accept and really be transformed.

When I'm at the cross I see one who loved me with a love that was just incredible. I see one who bled for me. I see one who cared enough about me that he gave his own life for my sin and my guilt. I see one who loved me so much that he wanted to take me to be with him forever. He wanted me to be his friend forever. When I stand at the cross visually in my mind, when I see Jesus, I am reached in my heart. My heart is emptied out in his presence. And with my heart I come to believe and understand what he's done for me.

Someone has said Christianity is an empty religion. If you go to Palestine today you may see a carpenter's shop but it will be empty. The carpenter is no longer there. You go to the synagogue in Capernaum it also is empty. He is not there. If you go to the place where he was crucified it also is empty. If you go to the tomb it also is empty. If you think in your open mind, when you've knelt figuratively speaking at the foot of the cross and brought to the Lord your sins and your burdens and your cares and given them to him you have come to the cross loaded with guilt, loaded with condemnation, but when you are finished and you leave you too are empty. When he ascended into heaven he left the world empty. When we die if we love Christ, that form is empty because Christianity is an empty religion. Jesus has emptied only to replace the emptiness with his living presence. Life's sins are made empty because of Christ. They are emptied out. My life will someday halt and the corpse will be emptied. But Jesus Christ has come that I might be with him forever. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

OUR FRIEND FOREVER

Jesus, Our Friend

We thank you our Lord Jesus for speaking to our hearts. We sense as we read the gospels that we need those things that are told by men who encounter the truth that their heads could have never invented but which their hearts could understand and receive. We too are that way today, Lord. We've come into contact with you. We thank you for the resurrection. We would examine our lives in these moments and we would recognize this great truth that to the degree that we allow impurity in our life to that degree we will not see you. To the degree we go with unconfessed sin, to that degree we will not understand your resurrection. To the degree that we turn away from you, to that degree the Easter story will simply be another tale, another religion among others, another empty story; but it is Lord as we turn our life to you in a full act of contrition and confession that we come by way of the cross, that we encounter you the living one who cared so much for us that you gave your life that whoever believes should not perish but have everlasting life. Thank you for calling us today to believe in our heart. Lord, make that phrase real. "Believe in your heart." And thank you for the promise we will be saved.

Do you believe in your heart that he is risen from the dead? If you believe that he is risen from the dead in your heart would you raise your hand as an affirmation to God. I believe in my heart that Jesus is risen. Thank you, Lord. We sense that there is such a level of faith arising to you in this moment. Lord, you want us now to go forth on Easter Sunday with something far deeper than intellectual knowledge. Something far deeper than a surface experience. That your Holy Spirit seeks to transform us in the deep roots of our life, to root out the uncleanness, to root out impurities, to bring us as cleansed sons and daughters believing with our whole heart, loving God with all of our mind, soul, strength, and heart. Grant us Lord that we shall be like you. We know that you will. Amen.