

She Knew He Wouldn't Be There

Mark 14:3-9

Lent 4, March 18, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

In the beginning God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God spoke and it came into being. He spoke and it happened. The Word of God creates.

God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation and seed bearing plants, each according to their kinds," and it was so. God spoke and life came to be. Before God spoke there was no life. There was light. There was a sky. There was land and oceans that were gathered together. But there was no vegetation until God spoke the vegetation into existence. He said, "Let there be vegetation," and it was.

God later said, "Let the oceans team with living creatures according to their kinds and let the birds fill the heavens according to their kinds," and it was so. Before God said this there were no birds. Before God said this, there were no living things in the oceans. Once God spoke, life came into existence. God speaks and then things exist. God speaks and then things live.

God later said, "Let the earth bring forth living things according to their kinds, all beasts of the field, and all things that creep along the ground," and it was so. God also said, "Let us make man in our image and according to our likeness," and so God made man in His image and in His likeness. He made them male and female.

There were no animals running around on the earth before God spoke, Once God spoke there they were. They were there and they lived. There were no human beings before God spoke. But once He spoke there they were.

Now maybe it is human beings that throw us because in between God speaking human beings into existence and their existence there is a slight delay. With everything else God simply spoke and there they were. With human beings there is a delay. God speaks about human beings and then he forms Adam from the dust of the earth and breathes into Adam's nostrils the breath of life. Eve then comes along later after Adam is in the garden and caring for it.

The delay is important. It means that sometimes God speaks and it does not instantly come to pass. Sometimes God speaks and it comes to pass later on. And for those people who live after God has spoken, but before it comes to pass, they must live by faith. There is no other way to live. Not everything that God says instantly comes to pass, but everything that God says does come to pass!

Nevertheless, even with the delay when God speaks life into existence it comes to pass. That is part of the point of the account of the creation. God wants to get it established right away in the beginning just what kind of a God He is and how He operates. He is the God who speaks life into existence.

With Abraham and Sarah the account is the same, but the delay is longer. God appears to Abraham and tells him that he and Sarah are going to have a son. Sarah has been barren her whole life. Abraham is old. Both of them are past child rearing years. In other words even if Sarah were not barren her whole life, she would still not be having children at the age that God tells them that they are going to have a son.

Then there is a delay. God delays for some time before finally granting a son to Abraham and Sarah. And while they wait for the fulfillment of what God has said, they live by faith. When God brings about what He has said, He brings forth life where there wasn't any before. Abraham's body was as good

as dead. He was 99 when Isaac was born. Sarah was just ten years behind him and had been barren her whole life. Her body is dead. His body is dead and yet where there has not been life before, God speaks life into being. They conceive Isaac and he is born.

The same is true when Isaac marries Rebekah and they find that she is barren. Isaac prays to the Lord this time. The Lord opens Rebekah's womb and brings forth life where there wasn't any. There the delay was not so bad.

Then Isaac and Rebekah's son Jacob marries Leah and Rachel. Rachel is barren. She does not have any children. When she finally does have children it is because the Lord opened her womb. God brought forth life where there was not any life.

The same thing was true of Hannah and Elkanah. Hannah wants a son, but she is barren. She prays in front of the tabernacle and asks God for a son. Eli, the priest, is standing there and speaks God's word on God's behalf and tells her that the Lord will grant her request. Now the Lord is delivering His life giving word through an intermediary. The priest, Eli, was authorized by God to deliver God's Word to Hannah that He would give Hannah what she had requested. If I remember the account correctly, Eli doesn't even know what he is telling Hannah will happen because he doesn't know for what she has prayed. Nevertheless, the Word of the Lord goes out from Eli, and in spite of the fact that Eli is not a good priest in his character, the Word of the Lord proves true and Hannah bears a son. The Word of the Lord went forth. Life came forth where there was not life before.

When it comes to our Lord Jesus Christ, God raises the stakes. God raises the stakes first of all in the birth of our Lord. At least Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah had husbands. Mary has no husband whatsoever. God takes things up a notch when He sends the angel Gabriel to announce to Mary that she is going to conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and bear a son. He will be great and will be the Son of the Most High. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. He will sit on the throne of His father David.

The Word of the Lord came to Mary through the angel. The angel delivered the Word of the Lord and like so many other times before the Word of the Lord brought forth life where there was no life. The Word of the Lord was plainer here because with the birth of our Lord the Word of the Lord was not repairing a broken human reproductive system to bring forth a child. Here the Word of the Lord was conceiving a child outright! Here in the conception of our Lord, the Word of the Lord was once again bringing forth life where there was none. Just like in the beginning God brings forth life at the speaking of His Word.

Then Word of God incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ, goes around raising the dead. Again the stakes are higher. Jesus does not simply raise a person from the dead. He raises many people from the dead. Unlike Elijah and Elisha who raised one person from the dead apiece, He raises Jairus' daughter. He raises the widow's son at Nain. He raises Lazarus from the dead. He raises others who are not recorded in the Gospels. And He sends forth His apostles with the authority to raise the dead. In book of Acts Peter delivers the Word of the Lord to a dead woman named Dorcas and she rose from the dead.

Jesus sends forth His Word and whether delivered personally by the Lord Himself or delivered through His appointed intermediaries, the Word of the Lord brings forth life where there wasn't any before.

Now this same Lord Jesus Christ, gives forth this Word: The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of evil men. They will kill Him. On the third day He will rise. The Lord Jesus announces that at least three times during his ministry: The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of evil men. They

will kill Him. On the third day He will rise. He may have said it more than three times, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke record three times, He said this. He did not merely say it once like He did in the beginning when He brought forth life on the earth and it was so. He says it three times. And just like in the past sometimes His Word had a delay between when He spoke it and when it came to pass so also here. Jesus is not immediately arrested when He predicts His betrayal, death, and resurrection. This leaves room for those people who have heard His Word after He said it, but live in the time before it is fulfilled, to have faith.

This brings us down to the woman who anointed Jesus. She puts expensive perfume on our Lord. It is worth at least \$20 000 in today's money. That is why some of those people figured that it was a waste. Jesus points out that you will always have the poor with you, which means that you cannot solve the problem of poverty. The poor are there for you to care for them. And then He says that she has anointed Him in preparation for His burial and that what she has done will be told in memory of her wherever His Gospel is preached.

Well, we are in a place where His Gospel is preached and so this account is read to us. But why is she so important? We don't even know her name from Mark's account. There are so many things that so many people did for our Lord that could be told in memory of them wherever His Gospel is preached. Why is this woman so special as to receive the Lord's acclaim that until He returns again for the final judgment, this woman's deed for Jesus will be told in her memory. Why is her memory so important?

Is it because the alabaster jar of perfume is so expensive? Is that it? It doesn't seem likely as the Lord has such a disdain for money in other places, but Mark takes the time to record that other people said how much the perfume was worth. So the value of the perfume must be part of the reason. But the other part is that this woman has got the cart in front of the horse when it comes to Jewish burial custom. In Jewish burial custom the body is anointed after the person dies. Why is this woman anointing Jesus now? Granted it is close to His death, but it is hardly after His death.

The only explanation is that this woman believes Jesus. She lives in the time after He spoke His word, but before it is fulfilled. It only looks like she has the cart in front of the horse to those who do not believe the words of the Lord. But for those who believe the words of the Lord and know how God operates with His Word and how it gives life where there isn't any, this anointing is the most natural thing in the world. In fact it is expected.

She believes Jesus when He says that He will be betrayed into the hands of sinful men. She believes Jesus when He says that they will kill Him. She believes all of it and knows that with such violence she may not be able to get to her Lord in time to anoint Him before He is buried. Then He says that on the third day He will rise. She therefore also knows that she may not have time to anoint Him after He dies because He is not going to stay dead! She does not have the time to wait the days necessary after His death to arrive at His burial place safely and anoint Him. What if He dies before a Sabbath and she has to rest on the Sabbath? That means that by the time she gets there it will be the third day and by the third day, He will be gone.

She knows that if she waits to anoint the body of Jesus after He dies, He won't be there! But she knows that He will die and so anointing is appropriate. So she anoints Him. She anoints Him because she knows how God works and she believes the words that He has spoken. In other words, she knows that God brings forth life where there isn't any and He does so when He speaks His Word. It does not matter if there is a delay in between when the Lord speaks His word and when it comes to pass, it will come to pass. She anoints Him because she believes Him.

And now, O people of God, I realize that I am a humble messenger and not the Lord Himself, but just like wicked Eli, God chose to deliver His words through a wicked human being and so I stand before you a wicked human being, but nevertheless one whom God has sent to tell you, by the Word of the Lord when He returns, You will rise from the dead and life everlasting will be yours.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.