



from the desk of . . .

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NOW FOR THE REST OF THE STORY

Matthew 28:11-20

How many of you remember Paul Harvey? (X)

Paul Harvey was a radio broadcaster,
who did news with a human interest bent to it.
His show was heard out of Chicago for over 50 years.
And he began each program with ... "Hello Americans."

The Armed Forces Radio picked up his broadcast,
& that's when I 1st became a fan. I started listening to
him when I was stationed in Germany.

One of my favorite parts of his broadcast was,
"The Rest Of The Story."

For example, He'd begin talking about a 13-year-old
boy who received a cash prize from Franklin Roosevelt,
& then after a commercial break we'd find out that "the
rest of the story" was that the teenage boy was Fidel
Castro. Little chance encounters & surprise endings
were to be expected on Paul Harvey's show. ...

"From as far back as anyone can remember,
Kristoffer knew where he was going.
A clean-cut lad ... bright, well behaved.

The kind any parent would be proud to call their son.

His father, a major general in the Air Force, was immensely proud when young Kristoffer announced his intention someday to join the military. Kristoffer was 10, but even then, he knew what he must do.

His 1st concern ... grades, achievement. An air-tight academic record. Then Brownsville, TX-born Kristoffer was in H.S. His dad was transferred to San Mateo, CA. There were the usual family adjustments connected with the move. If ever a boy had the excuse to falter, it was then. Kristoffer ... instead ... excelled!

To his classmates, a square ... remember that phrase? While the others bought be-bop records, Kristoffer bought ballads. When others stayed out late, Kristoffer stayed home, studied. He had a plan, & no one knew better than he what it would take.

After H.S., Kristoffer attended private Pomona College in Claremont, CA. By this time, excellence was becoming an obsession. Scholastic excellence.

Athletic excellence.

Kristoffer did not just play football ... he had to be a football hero. A Golden Gloves boxer. A sports writer for the student paper. An ROTC commander. By now, any career in the world he might choose was drawing within his grasp. But not just any career for Kristoffer.

Before receiving his degree from Pomona, Kristoffer entered the Atlantic Monthly collegiate short-story contest ... & won 1st prize. Then the ultimately prestigious academic recognition,
a Rhodes scholarship & on to Oxford.

There was no hesitating ... no soul-searching ... no resting on his laurels. By the time Kristoffer reached Oxford, he had written one novel & was beginning a 2nd. Book publishers were clamoring for his manuscripts,
but Kristoffer had something else in mind.

He told his daddy about it when he was 10. So after graduating for Oxford ... after achieving as much as any young man could be expected to achieve, Kristoffer joined the Army. He went through jump school. Through Ranger school. Through flight school. He was a pilot, was a CAPT, was stationed in Germany, & at last, the big break. The assignment he had dreamed about. Back to the U.S. ... to become a MAJ ... to become an instructor ...
at West Point.

Some just seem to know from the beginning where they're headed. What life expects of them. So, it seemed to be ... for Kristoffer. A boy who from the beginning of elementary school concerned himself with grades instead of grumbling. A boy who from the start was called a square ... but didn't care. A football hero. A novelist. A Golden Gloves boxer. An ROTC commander.

A Rhodes scholar. A young man like that ... could go anywhere. A CAPT about to become a MAJ. A West Point instructor about to live a childhood dream. A young man like that ... could go anywhere ... could do anything ...
in or out of the military.

So, Kristoffer ... became a name you know. He became a #1 recording artist of cow-country classics & hillbilly ballads, (X) Kris Kristofferson."

And now you know the rest of the story.

Now the thing that grabs me about Kris Kristofferson's story is the fact that he seemed to know from early on where he was going,
& he allowed nothing to deter him.

That sounds a lot like our Savior, who probably had some sense, early on, where He too was headed.

God had a specific plan for Him, & it wasn't to take over the family carpentry business. It all became evident, especially during Holy Week ... suffering > crucifixion > resurrection > Heaven. (Matthew 16:21)

Last Sunday we celebrated Jesus' resurrection ...
today, the rest of the story.

Good News, as recorded by Matthew, to you who are gathered here at C.C.R.M. this morning for worship.
Within your hearing comes the Word of the Lord ...

While the women went on their way, some of the soldiers guarding the tomb went back to the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. The chief priests met with the elders and made their plan; they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, "You are to say that his disciples came during the night and stole his body while you were asleep. And if the Governor should hear of this, we will convince him that you are innocent, and you will have nothing to worry about."

The guards took the money and did what they were told to do. And so that is the report spread around by the Jews to this very day.

The eleven disciples went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him, even though some of them doubted. Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:11-20)

May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen

Our Gospel lesson picks up the story after Jesus' resurrection on Easter morning. So, according to Matthew, what happened next? Well, even before He had a chance to appear to the disciples ...

the lies about what took place began.

"The chief priests met with the elders & made their plan; they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers & said, 'You are to say that his disciples came during the night & stole his body while you were asleep.'"

Sometimes lies are out & out deliberate, sometimes they're "innocent." But either way, they're becoming a lot more common. There was an article in a recent Time magazine about telling the truth & telling lies. And the jest of it was that for the most part Americans simply lie ... & don't think a thing about it.

- the check is in the mail
- I'll start my diet tomorrow
- we service what we sell
- give me your # & the Dr. will call you right back
- money cheerfully refunded
- this hurts me more than it hurts you
- one size fits all
- your luggage isn't lost, it's only misplaced
- leave your resume & we'll keep it on file
- your table will be ready in a few minutes
- open wide, it won't hurt a bit

Americans may regularly lie in these ways,
but the worst lie is the one that the chief priests told.
Their lie led people away from God.

I find it interesting that the very 1st **sin** that's
recorded in Scripture is precipitated by a **lie**. The snake
appears to Eve in the Garden & asks Eve ...

"Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree
in the garden?"

And when Eve responds saying they could eat the
fruit from every tree but one,
& if they ate from that tree they would die.

"That's not true; you will not die," said the snake.

(Genesis 3:1-4)

Satan has made a habit of **lying** about God
from the very beginning.

Jesus said of him ... (X)

"When he tells a lie, he is only doing what is natural to
him, because he is a liar & the father of all lies." (John 8:44)

And here we find, just hours after Jesus'
resurrection of Jesus, the very 1st public comment about
it ... was a lie, "Jesus didn't rise from the dead ...

His disciples came & stole His body."

You understand, the women weren't the only ones
who knew about the resurrection ...

the soldiers also knew about it.

They were present when the angels rolled away the stone & they were terrified by it.

So, 1st thing Easter morning they went to the chief priests to report what had happened. "Angels came! They opened the tomb! The body isn't there!"

(X) How wicked are human hearts! (Jeremiah 17:9)
When Jesus was dying on the cross, these same religious leaders had taunted Him. "If you'll come down off the cross now, we will believe in you!" (Matthew 27:42)

And here Jesus had done something far greater than that. He had been raised from death!

So, did they believe in Him? ... Of course not.

They **could** not believe because they **would** not believe. They hated Jesus, so they pulled the soldiers into an evil conspiracy, & gave them money, while instructing them ...

"You are to say that his disciples came during the night & stole his body while you were asleep. And if the Governor should hear of this, we will convince him that you are innocent, & you will have nothing to worry about."

And Matthew concludes ... "The guards took the money & did what they were told to do. And so that is the report spread around by the Jews to this very day."

What "day" is he talking about? ... The day he wrote his Gospel, some 40 or so years after Jesus' resurrection.

But the leader's lie didn't end then.

It's been repeated throughout history ... even to our own day by those who are enemies of Jesus & His Gospel. It's repeated anytime someone denies our Lord's resurrection.

Sadly, today there are many who simply won't believe in a resurrection. From a human perspective, the resurrection wasn't possible & as a result, choose not to believe. "The disciples stole Jesus' body."

And not only don't they believe ... some have attempted to make a detailed study at what might have happened following Jesus' crucifixion.

One of the more "popular" theories came from Hugh Schonfield in his book, "The Passover Plot." He suggests that Jesus planned to be crucified but arranged to be drugged with fortified wine.

Then, while still in His drugged state, He was rescued from the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, who revived by him. Jesus then appeared to His disciples as "if" He had been resurrected.

It's hard to know where even to begin correcting all the fallacies in Schonfield's argument. But ultimately it becomes a faith issue, & as Jesus Himself said ... (X) "If they will not listen to Moses & the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone were to rise from death."

(Luke 16:31)

But that's not the only one. The unbelieving world has told all kinds of **lies** about Jesus in order to **discredit** Him & Christianity. And you've all heard them:

- Jesus isn't the only way to God
- the Bible's just a book about God
- Jesus was simply a good man
- There's no Heaven or Hell

Well, in the midst of being bombarded by so much misinformation how do we really know what is true?

My response is really a 2-handed answer.

1st of all, Jesus claimed to be truth. (John 14:6) (X)
 Truth is rooted in the eternal God who's all powerful (Jeremiah 32:17) & unchangeable. (Malachi 3:6)

Truth is far more than facts.

It's not just something we act upon. It acts upon us. We can't change the **truth**, but the **truth** can change us. It sanctifies (sets us apart) from the falsehoods woven into our sin natures. (John 8:32)

Truth is reality. It's the way things really are. What seems to be & what really is are often not the same. To know the truth is to see accurately.

To believe what isn't true is to be blind.

God has written His truth on human hearts. (Romans 2:15)

Shame & twinges of conscience come from a recognition that truth has been violated.

Truth is far more than a moral guide. Jesus declared ... (X) "I am the way, the truth, & the life; no one goes to the Father except by me."

He didn't say He would show the truth, or teach the truth, or model the truth. He is the truth. Truth personified. He's the source of all truth, the embodiment of truth, & therefore, the reference point for evaluating all truth-claims.

So, we start with Jesus ... but the 2nd hand is faith. We can stand firm in our faith. (X) "To have faith is to be sure of the things we cannot see." (Hebrews 11:1)

We don't need to physically see something to know that it exists ... air for example.

"The 11 disciples went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him, even though some of them doubted."

Isn't that interesting? ... Here's just another reason I appreciate the Scriptures & believe that they're authentically from God. If they weren't ...

Matthew wouldn't have written that final phrase ... "some of them doubted" ... he's referring to his friends.

Most likely this is Thomas. (John 20:25) Matthew doesn't really tell us when this post resurrection appearance takes place. (1 Corinthians 15:5-7) There were many of them in the 40 days before His ascension. (The Acts 1:9)

Even so, let's put ourselves in the place of the 11 disciples. This has been a whirlwind ride. Jesus had been beaten. Jesus had been crucified. Jesus died. Jesus had been buried. ... And now He's back? ...

"Yeah ... I want to believe it. But ..."

So, Matthew tells us that "Jesus drew near." That's what happened with Thomas. He also doubted ... until Jesus came & stood in front of him, "Stop your doubting, & believe!" (John 20:27)

When the fall of the Confederacy was at hand, General Grant invited President Lincoln to come visit him at his headquarters at City Point on the James River. As they sat that night around the campfire, Lincoln related some of his characteristic anecdotes, & then sat in silence, looking into the fire. Grant looked up & asked him, "Mr. President, did you at any time doubt the final success of the cause?"

Straightening himself up in his camp chair & leaning forward & lifting his hand by way of emphasis, Lincoln answered with the greatest solemnness ...

"Never, for a moment did I doubt!"

Wouldn't we like to be able to make that confession to our Savior? "Lord, in the midst of everything that has happened in my life ... never, for a moment did I doubt."

Jesus drew near & said to them, (X)

"I have been given all authority in heaven & on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere & make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, & the Holy Spirit, & teach them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Those words are known as "The Great Commission." It's Jesus' final earthly command ... & we need to do something about it. We must go & make disciples.

Whenever we think about missionaries ... it's the Carwell's, or the Woods, or Elaine. But the truth of the matter is ... God has called all of us to be missionaries.

To be a **missionary** is the same thing as being **evangelistic**, & it's literally the **calling** of every follower of Jesus.

Jesus said ... "As the Father sent me, so I send you."
(John 20:21)

The Father **sent** Jesus, & during His time on earth He bore witness of the Father in everything He said & did. And in the same way He is **sending** us to bear witness of His amazing saving grace in everything we say & do. (Colossians 3:17)

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we become children of God, (Romans 8:15), & as a result have tremendous joy of sharing with others what we have discovered.

We've had 6 of our grandchildren with us this week.

And we were all going in different directions. But when we got back together the kids couldn't wait to tell about their adventures.

What happens to us when we "grow up"? ... Here we've experienced the most exciting thing in all eternity ... & we're reluctant to talk about it with others.

Is it because we fear being ridiculed, or ostracized, or persecuted? ... Now if losing friends & family is what's preventing us from being faithful witnesses, then let's consider what Jesus said ... (X) "If the world hates you, just remember that it hated me 1st." (John 15:18)

"Happy are you when people insult you & persecute you & tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. Be happy & glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted." (Matthew 5:11-12)

So, the call of God on our lives is not only to love the Lord, the **Great Commandment**, but also to be a missionary & fulfill the **Great Commission**.

So, the One who has "been given all authority in heaven & on earth" has told us to "go to all peoples everywhere & make them His disciples." But the exciting thing, as we do that, He will be here with us.

Matthew closes his Gospels with these words of Jesus ...

"And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."

This is a great empowering promise,
& it's wonderfully true.

At the beginning of his Gospel, Jesus was 1st introduced as Immanuel, which we're told means, "God is with us." (Matthew 1:23) And here, in the final sentence of the same book, that identical promise is repeated ...
"I will be with you always."

Do you know the legend of the Cherokee Indian youth's rite of passage? ... His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him, & leaves him alone.

The boy is required to sit on a stump the whole night & not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine through it.

He cannot cry out for help to anyone.

Once he survives the night ... he is a man.

He cannot tell the other boys of this experience, because each lad must come into manhood on his own.

Sitting there alone in the forest the boy is obviously terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. The wind blows the grass & trees. At times it even feels like the stump moves.

But he must sit there, never removing the blindfold.

It's the only way he can become a man.

Finally, after a horrific night the sun appears,
& he takes off his blindfold. (X)

It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him. He had been there the entire night ... protecting his son from harm.

We, too, are **never alone** in this world. Even when we don't realize it, our Heavenly Father is watching over us, "sitting on the stump" beside us. (Hebrews 13:5) When trouble comes, all we have to do is reach out to Him.

Beautiful story & a beautiful truth.

Again, Jesus promised, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age." And then, even at the end ...

"When I walk through Death Valley,
I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me."

(The Psalms 23:4)

Jesus will be with us as we go. We've been given a great task, but we don't need to attempt it on our own strength. We have the Lord's power at work within us, as well as His promise to be with us to the very end.

Someone has well said that history is HIS STORY. (X) And in the end, all that matters is HIS STORY, & if we have accepted His story, His truth, & His person, then the rest of the story will be our story. In other words, here's the rest of the story after the resurrection ... will we believe Him, trust Him, worship Him, & do His work? If so, we who are in Christ, will write the rest of the story for Him.

MARANA THA