

“This is the Lord’s doing...”
Reading from the Old Testament: Psalm 118:1, 21-24
Reading from the Gospels: Matthew 28:1-10

We go about our days without much thought given to how significantly our lives have been altered by the positive contributions or malevolent designs of individuals or solitary events. Though it is hard to imagine, a 25-year-old packing for her first business trip may well have little cognizance of how our travels, and indeed our lives, were forever altered by the events that transpired on a sunny Tuesday morning in September, 2001. She would be even less likely to comprehend how many stocking feet have trundled through airport security lines as a result of one man’s failed attempt to detonate an explosive tucked into the sole of his sneaker. Nor would she have reason to be aware of how thankful she should be that a similar failure could have resulted in our being required to remove our underwear for TSA inspection. Singular individuals whose behaviors altered life for just about everyone. Individual events, the consequences of which are felt for generations.

Take, for instance, basketball. On the heels of March Madness, we have been reminded yet again of the importance of making your free throws. What you probably don’t know is why there is a specific rule

prohibiting the free throw shooter from crossing the plane of the free throw line before the ball hits the rim, backboard, or net. The rule was instituted because Wilt Chamberlain could actually jump from the free throw line and dunk the ball before his feet hit the floor. Wilt's dominance was also the reason the free-throw lane was expanded from 12 to 16 feet wide, and also why a rule against offensive goaltending was added. Wilt's presence transformed the game. One guy, yet his influence had an impact on a whole population of players who possibly have never seen the highlights of his career.

There was a death last week that may not have shown up on your radar, yet his work has an incredible influence on almost every aspect of your life: from how you think, to how you study, to how you troubleshoot a plumbing emergency, to how you communicate, to how you gather information, listen to music, drive your car, monitor your health, tell time, buy groceries, and talk to people face to face even though you're on opposite sides of the globe. How familiar are you with the name Gordon Moore? His face never graced a Wheaties box and his obituary may not have graced your favored newsfeed, but his work had an immense impact on how you function from day to day.

When we think of technology as a place, what comes to mind? Silicon Valley. How did it get that label? Silicon makes up over 27% of the earth's crust, however, the area of Silicon Valley is not particularly a source of it. The area gets its name because of what they do with silicon there. Among its many uses, silicon is a semiconductor which conducts electricity faster than an insulator.

While philosophers in the Middle Ages contemplated how many angels could dance on the head of a pin, Gordon Moore's genius was in contemplating how many transistors could be etched onto a silicon wafer. (*The Economist*)

Moore's ideas were integral in making that number higher and higher. He understood that focusing on making the transistors smaller and smaller would multiply the number that could be squeezed onto the surface of a silicon wafer, thus providing more and more computing power in the tiniest of chips. In the 1960s, a computer required the space of a large room, and it was during that era that Moore foresaw the day when your watch would be exponentially more powerful than those behemoth computers.

The influence of Gordon Moore's ideas is seen in one of the most important geopolitical issues of our time — the availability, or lack thereof, of computer chips. The tensions in the Taiwan straight, your inability to get your hands on a Ford Bronco, the perturbation around TikTok, your access to all the seasons of Ted Lasso, and the surgeon's ability to perform a transplant — It's all about the chips. Yet, you may never hear the name of Gordon Moore again. Our lives are influenced in untold ways by individuals we've never heard of, and find little reason to consider.

Similarly, our lives are different from what they would be were it not for an event that may have faded from our consciousness, but continues to impact how we encounter this world. April 19, 1775; February 1877; June 28, 1914; September 28, 1928; October 28, 1929; December 7, 1941; April 12, 1955; June 29, 1956 — A Jeopardy champion may know the significance of those dates, and thanks to Google you could quickly determine the event with which they are associated, but their continuing importance may well be lost on you as you go about your day.

And yet ... when was the last time you thought about the threat of polio? Why do you drive to Pittsburgh instead of taking a train? How many

problems continue to plague the South as a result of what occurred in February of 1877? We seldom reflect deeply upon the many people and events that shape both our world and our lives. And certainly, that is no less true in regard to the person and event we gather to acknowledge today.

“Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.” A single person and a singular event. You are most likely aware of some version of the story. For years you may have stood with others, saying in unison, “On the third day, he rose again from the dead.” Yet, how often do you pause to ponder how that event effects how you greet the world each morning? How deeply have you reflected on how that event influences your relationships, alters your worldview, reorients your understanding of health and healthcare, changes your approach to aging, empowers your ability to live in the present?

Mary and Mary approach a tomb, their hearts heavy with death. You may have felt that heaviness in the loss of someone dear. You may have taken that walk to the tomb, the cemetery, the columbarium, burdened by

dreams cut-off, terrorized by questions of what form your remaining days will take. You can feel your will to live flagging.

Unlike the other gospels, Matthew doesn't have a reason or even a task that would lead them to a tomb they know is sealed, for they were there on Friday when it was locked tight by the guards. Nevertheless, they come.

Sometimes, we know not why we go; it's just where our feet lead us. Mary and Mary are stunned by an angel who says, "Do not be afraid..." But we are so used to being afraid. It's the most popular sport in our society. Somebody's going to take advantage of you; how will you protect your kids in a scary world? Why you'll hover over them like Hueys. A skinned knee may bring out the reporters — Could this band-aid have been prevented?

We're so used to being afraid — We don't like to talk about death, but our fear of it guides so much of our behavior. Here a pill, there a surgery, everywhere a remedy, all purporting to deny aging, deny death. Yet, when the commercial aimed at me lists the possible side effects of the purported cure, I'm not so sure prolonging our physical existence at all costs is worth the suffering. In 2021, pharmaceutical companies spent over \$6.8 billion in

advertising targeting our insecurities and fears ... Do not fear? But we do it so well, and in many ways those fears do shackle our lives, our judgment altered as we obsess about death avoidance and grow suspect of everyone and everything, adding them to the list of threats. The consequence, of course, being that the time spent fearing death equates to time lost for celebrating life. When our conversations are dominated by our aches and pains and doctor's appointments, or by our suspicions and cynicism, there's no time left to speak of beauty, blessings, meaning, purpose, and hope.

As the day dawned, the women went to see the tomb. Some of you know well what pulled them there, a desire to maintain some thread of connection to the one we've loved and lost. In the film, *Forrest Gump*, after Jenny's death, Forrest goes to her grave, speaking to her as I am speaking to you now, sharing with her the news of the day, the kind of life abundant conversation we so often neglect in our over-scheduled, too busy to breathe existence. In *Forrest* we see our desire to hold onto some thread of connection to love lost. But, an angel intrudes upon the Marys' grief.

“Do not fear; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.” Sometimes, when

watching a movie you'll get a strong sense of where the story is going, yet in the climactic scene there is a sudden shocking plot twist that changes everything, that blows apart your suppositions, and reveals that maybe the world doesn't bow to your genius, because obviously, you missed something along the way. Of course, we can't admit to the crack in our confidence. The most we can bring ourselves to say is: "Well, that was unexpected."

"He is not here; for he has been raised." Mary and Mary are overcome with conflicting emotions — fear and great joy. Joy as shattered dreams are reconstructed; fear as we confront a power greater than the brightest minds could even begin to assimilate. I love Dostoyevsky's observation on the resurrection: "Life had replaced logic." (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*)

Many minds cannot make the leap, because it betrays all we have learned. Many more minds prefer the path of least resistance, surmising it is easier just not to think about it. Indeed, that is perhaps the most common practice — it's just not worth the mental energy required to think about it. We put empty tomb questions in the box with the Gordon Moores and the reasons behind the rules for free throws and the impact of the Compromise of 1877, which effectively ended reconstruction and paved the way for Jim

Crow. Put it in the box with all those things that may tax our brains or challenge our assumptions or, more significantly, change the way we see our world.

“He is not here; for he has been raised.” It’s easier to just dismiss it or ignore it. Yet, both mindsets evade the question at the heart of creation — Is it true? To paraphrase C.S. Lewis - If [the resurrection] is false, it is of no importance. If it is true, it is of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.

To grasp the power of resurrection changes everything we understand about the world — it is no longer going to hell in a hand basket; it is no longer defined by threats, because we know that no threat can separate us from God’s ultimate will and purpose for us; our days are no longer defined by suspicions, because no menace can compete with a love so powerful that the grave cannot hold it down.

“He has been raised.” It is the fulcrum of history, the difference between an existence shadowed by death and a life defined by love. Henri Nouwen said that with Christ’s resurrection, we too, “can face death with

hope, trusting that death is but the painful but blessed passage that will bring us face-to-face with our God.”

You see, such hope fuels our greatest superpower in this life, for embracing resurrection hope means that we can live can live with generosity now. As N.T. Wright observes: “Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven.” (N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*)

Yes, death is real. Yet, it is but one element of a larger narrative that stretches far beyond death into eternity; a larger narrative that arcs toward God’s purpose of holistic reconciliation. Taking resurrection seriously, meditating on it’s meaning with all our mind, heart, and strength, transforms our sense of our place in the world as we join our risen Lord in pursuit of the reconciliation of all things, a purpose that has already been revealed, a work that has already begun, and a promise that will come to fruition. The power of death is fear and suspicion. The power of resurrection is invulnerable love. And isn’t such love worthy, not only of our remembrance and a nice brunch, but also of our lives? Amen.