

The Great Promise Keeper

Psalm 118:14-29
Luke 24:1-12

7:30am Easter April 1, 2018
Faith Community

Some colleges and universities have gotten creative in how they evaluate applications for admission. In addition to the typical transcripts and references, some ask for essays on assigned topics. Here are a few.

Brandies University asks, “If you could choose to be raised by robots, dinosaurs, or aliens, which would you pick? Why?”

Kalamazoo College: “What invention would the world be better off without and why?”

University of Chicago: “So where is Waldo, really?”

University of Virginia at Charlottesville: “To tweet or not to tweet?”

Tufts University: “Kermit the Frog famously lamented, ‘It’s not easy being green.’ Do you agree?”¹

That got me to wondering, what if we’ve been asking the wrong questions all along?

Very early on that first Easter morning, a small group of women were on their way to the tomb where Jesus’ body had been placed. They wanted to perform a ceremonial anointing on the body. It would be an exercise in futility, as they seemed to realize once they got going:

....they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” (Mark 16:2-3, TNIV)

And a good question it was. Most tombs were secured by a large disc-shaped stone rolled in a groove across the entrance, requiring several strong people to move. They were not up to that task, but kept walking anyway. They would soon discover a different and much more important question.

Once they arrived on the scene, Luke says a couple angels asked them,

¹ “What’s the Best College-Entrance Question? (It’s an 11-way Tie)” Mental Floss, September, 2014, p. 38.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! (Luke 24:5-6)

And you have to wonder, friends, if we've been doing the same thing. Some of us spend a lifetime asking the wrong questions. For that matter, we tend to measure the wrong things as well.

For example, imagine, in your next job interview, in addition to your education, technical skills and experience, being asked about the amount of time you spend with your family or the amount of money that you give away, or what kind of a friend you are.

We may violate every HIPPA or other privacy law in the book, but we might also save a few lives in the process. That's because you can be a high achieving, power hitting mover and shaker, and still be a train wreck of a human being.

So, how much time do you spend with people you love, and who love you?

You can spend endless amounts of time on your latest acquisition or case, or sale, or game, or degree, and put yourself into an early grave.

You can be a star on stage or on the field, you can go from one victory to another, with countless adoring fans, and still feel like the loneliest person on the planet.

Or, in other words,

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!

A pastor whom I admire wrote this heartbreaking story:

"A few years ago a man asked if he could visit me at my home. It was clear that he was on the verge of losing his emotional stability. The pressures of a struggling marriage, a feeling of failure in life (despite his business success), and declining health were eating away at his will to live.

"This man had become addicted to profit. Three times he had built successful businesses and then walked away from them because of the increased stress in his life. Each time he began again he had vowed to slow down and balance his business life with other priorities. But he apparently could

not walk away from one more deal when it stared him in the face and asked him to bow.

“On another day we met for a meal. As we drove together, we came to a point where we could see the buildings he had built, which housed his most recent flourishing business. Everything on that property was a monument to achievements that people, who think success is everything, would want.

“As we drove past I said to him, ‘You must be very proud of all this.’ And I meant what I said because I admired the substantial nature of his effort. I shall never forget his response.

“‘I hate every square foot of it. It’s cost me my marriage, my family, my health, and my relationship with God. I wish I’d never seen any part of it.’

“In less than a year he was dead, more of a broken heart than anything else. Given a normal lifetime, he should’ve had thirty more years.”²

T. S. Eliot put it this way:

The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings

**Knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word....
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?**³

There are questions you and I would do well to consider. What if we’ve been asking the wrong ones all these years? Or, as someone else put it,

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!

² Gordon MacDonald, Christ Followers in the Real World: Developing a Faith that Works in the ‘90s (Nashville, Oliver Nelson, 1991), pp. 211-2

³ T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from the Rock”
<http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/wisdoms/eliot1.htm>