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Easter Day  
April 4<sup>th</sup> 2010

Easter Day that year was very rainy. “It is a nasty day to be on the road” thought the priest but he had an appointment to keep and so he said a quick prayer for safety as he pulled onto the highway.

He was on his way to a service at the interfaith chapel at the University of Victoria and in his car he had boxes of Bibles – Bibles especially made for students that his church had raised as a gift for the UVIC chaplain to give away. On the top of the box was his own Bible, with his sermon carefully tucked inside.

As he travelled he thought to himself “I guess today I’m the Sower of the Seed... I wonder if the Sower of the Seed had to worry about hydroplaning?”

The evangelist thought over his sermon. He had spent a long time on it and had gone over and over it and had worked hard to make it interesting and relevant to the young people he was going to be preaching too – college students were a notoriously difficult audience. He prayed that his message would get through.

As he travelled, it began to rain and then it began to pour. Soon, the windshield wipers were working overtime and barely clearing his view. He discovered he was hanging onto the steering wheel with so hard his hands hurt. The traffic was bad and people were driving much too fast.

As he looked ahead he saw on the side of the road a hitchhiker holding out his thumb for a ride. Cars passed him by. He was a young man in his early twenties. He had long hair and his jeans were torn and he had a backpack on. He was soaked to the skin. The preacher drove by thinking of the bad experiences he had had with hitchhikers but something made him pull over. He couldn’t pass the boy by.

He backed up the car and the hitchhiker ran to meet him and pulled open the door. “Thanks” he said as he tumbled into the front seat “I was getting soaked.” As they picked up speed the young

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man fumbled to put his seat belt on and then looked around the car and noticing the boxes of Bibles.

And then he noticed the driver was wearing a black shirt and a white clerical collar. He shifted uneasily and then looked suddenly at the door as if wondering what his chances of survival would be if he suddenly jumped from the car and if he should risk it.

“You’re a priest”, he said a little unnecessarily and a lot louder than he meant to. The driver smiled to put the young man at ease. “Yeah I know” he said, but it’s ok, I’ve had my shots and I’m not contagious. So now you know who I am it’s my turn. I’m guessing you’re student - at Camosun College?”

“Yes,” the young man replied – I mean no – I go to UVIC - I study political science. Say, how did you know I was a student?”

“Ohhhh, just a lucky guess – look, are you hungry? I’ve some sandwiches in the backseat and a thermos of coffee you’re welcome to have it. I hope you don’t mind it black.” The young man accepted gratefully and the driver turned on the heat in the car to dry off his passenger.

Soon the student relaxed a bit.

“Where are you going” he asked the driver. “I’m going to a prayer meeting” he said. “I’m going to be speaking tonight – actually, I’ll be on campus so I can drop you off there.”

“What are you going to speak about?”

“I’m going to preach on the resurrection.”  
the driver replied.

“Oh,” said the student. And then, rather hesitantly asked “You mean, like, the resurrection of...Jesus?”

“Yes,” replied the priest.

“Well, how are you going to do that? I mean, it’s pretty hard to prove isn’t it? I mean, no offence or anything but there’s no real evidence is there. I mean, if you believe it that’s ok I mean I’ve nothing against religion or anything – I mean, I’m not religious I’m

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more a spiritual person - but I don't honestly see how you can talk about it without proof."

The priest was silent for a bit. Then an idea came to him.

"So what do you know about Jesus?"

"Well...I guess he was a good teacher and that he spoke about how to live together in peace and that he got himself killed. Some people like you believe he was resurrected and wrote about it in the gospels" he shrugged "I guess that's about it."

"Don't you think that is a bit odd?" asked the priest – "why should they say that? I mean why should people say he was resurrected?"

"I don't know. Because they were fooled or something there's lots of strange beliefs. Just because someone says something doesn't mean it's true."

"Well, to my mind," said the priest, "the fact that they said it at all is proof in my books."

"Huh?"

"Look at it this way. These people Jesus' friends his students his disciples had followed him around for three years. They loved the guy. They listened to him and they left everything they owned for him – and then he was arrested..."

"And they all ran away!" The student interrupted – "Some friends! Yeah, I remember that from Sunday School."

"Then they also saw him killed" he continued. "And how do you think they felt?"

"I don't know – ashamed I guess disillusioned. Sad – broken hearted probably."

"Yes. But don't forget scared. Very scared. If they rubbed out Jesus they would rub out his followers. Isn't that a standard political move? They went into hiding they didn't want to be found."

"So?"

"Well, that's the whole point something happened to them

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so that they changed – all of them. Suddenly there they are telling people that Jesus had risen from the dead.”

“Well, so what? They were mistaken. Or they were trying to hoax people.”

“Were they? Consider this. What would it accomplish? Why would they say Jesus had risen if it wasn’t true? That doesn’t make sense. They would draw attention to themselves and they would be arrested. Furthermore when they told their story they tell about Mary and the women as being the first witnesses of the resurrection.”

“Meaning what?” the student asked.

“Meaning that in Jesus’ day, women weren’t allowed to give evidence. Their evidence didn’t count and yet the disciples distinctly say that the women were the one who first saw Jesus. Now if you were going to try to cook up a story to fool people you wouldn’t discredit yourself like that would you?”

The young man shifted in his seat again, he hadn’t thought of that.

“I suppose you’ll want to convert me now” he said trying to laugh the awkwardness off.

“No,” said the priest. “I just want you to really think about this – it’s the most important idea in the world as far as I’m concerned.”

The student gazed out the window feeling a bit lost. They were now entering the outskirts of the city.

“Well,” he said, “You kind of surprise me. I thought you’d like, be beating me on the head with one of those Bibles or something.”

“No, no beating. I don’t do that but you’re welcome to take one if you wish to – they’re for students.”

They were silent as the car wove its way through Victoria and down MacKenzie heading to the campus.

“Where do you want me to drop you off?”

“At the SUB” replied the student.

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“Where?”

“Oh, sorry, ‘SUB’ means the Student Union Building.”

“Oh. Right.”

The car pulled over. He unbuckled his seatbelt and paused a moment his hand on the door handle “Well... thanks” he said. “I don’t really know what to think right now but you’ve given me something to think about.”

Then he hesitated – “but you know all you said made sense and everything but you really did something more than just argue your Christianity.”

The priest’s eyebrows went up in surprise.

“Sorry?!?”

“Well, what I mean is I waited in the rain two hours. You picked me up even though I probably looked well, like the stereotype student. You gave me something to eat and dried me off. You didn’t force me to talk or anything you showed me that you believe in the resurrection by what you did and not what you said...so...thanks.”

As he accelerated he saw in the rear view mirror the student wave goodbye. When he arrived at the chapel to preach he found one of the Bibles in the box was missing -he realized that his sermon was gone too it had been tucked in the Bible.

“Well, I guess I don’t need one now” He smiled to himself and realized that God had given him a great gift that journey .

He had been shown what he really needed to know as a preacher – “The best proof of the resurrection” he thought, “Is not in anything we could say, but is in who we really are.”

Amen.

Rev. David Peterson