

Sunday, May 21, 2006.

paul@survivalprimer.com

This article is posted at <http://www.survivalprimer.com/SoNowWhatAmISupposedtoDo.htm>

Came upon this a while ago, on the internet:

"So Now What Am I Supposed to Do?"

<http://www.spiritualtrails.com/05-27-2001.htm>

"They were looking intently into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?'" (Acts 1)

I've seen that same empty look! I walked into my health club some years ago. As I walked through the lounge on my way to the locker room, I saw one of my buddies sitting in a chair. I waved, but he didn't even acknowledge my presence. I came out of the locker room and he was still sitting there with a same blank look on his face - just staring unfocused. I walked over and said, "Jerry, are you OK?" After a few moments he slowly emerged out of his fog and looked up at me said in a quiet monotone, "I just found out my wife has cancer; so now what am I supposed to do?"

I've seen that same look on your face and mine, that intense, yet unfocused stare that says, "So now what am I supposed to do?"

Try to imagine what it must have been like for those disciples. They had followed Jesus for three years; heard him teach and preach; saw him heal; saw him cast out demons; saw him raise the dead! They feel in love with this man and they got their hopes up that he was the centuries-awaited Messiah of Israel who would throw off Israel's oppressors and re-establish them as divinely lead center of the world. Then came the DISAPPOINTMENT and DISILLUSIONMENT of that last horrible, fateful week when things turned from bad to worse and the next thing they knew he was dead! And even though he told them it had to happen that way, they really didn't understand. Their hopes in him had turned to ashes. Their trust in him had been crushed. Their expectations for him had turned to despair.

Then, barely having time to come to terms with their grief, still in a state of shock over his death - zap - he was back in their midst! Alive! Risen from the Dead! Can you imagine this roller-coaster of emotion these people were on?

According to Luke he hung around in his resurrected state for forty days; just long enough for them to get comfortable with him again; just long enough to re-establish their trust in him again; just long enough to have their hopes rekindled and their spirits lifted again; just long enough for them to think that he was finally going to be the kind of Messiah they had always hoped and expected he would be - a political Messiah who would call on God to send down legions of angels to destroy the Roman oppressors and re-establish Israel as an independent divinely lead political power. Hence their question "Lord, is now the time you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" In other words, Are you finally going to do it Lord? It's what we've been expecting you would do for these three years all along. Do it now Lord! Do it! Do it! Do it!

And then, at this ecstatic height of their revived expectations, "Poof!" He vanishes into the clouds! It's no wonder Luke says they were "looking intently" at the very spot where just moments before he had stood in their midst! It's an understatement. Their mouths had probably dropped open to the ground in utter shock! Can you imagine? I believe you can!

I've seen that same look in your face and mine. It's the look of shock! It's the stare of emptiness.

It's the gaze of loneliness. It's the look of grief. It's the look that says, "Now what are we supposed to do?"

- I've seen that look on the corporate face of a congregation after a beloved pastor has left and moved on. "So now what are we supposed to do?"

- We stand at the graves of our loved ones and we grieve. And sometimes from the depths of our being comes the cry "So now what am I supposed to do? How am I supposed to go on living without this person in my life who I loved, and I cherished, and I depended upon, and I looked to; this person who enhanced and fulfilled my life? So now what am I supposed to do?"

- The company downsizes, your job is eliminated. It was a good job. You enjoyed it! You were paid well - but now it's gone. Feeling like a victim you say, "So now what am I supposed to do?"

- The kids grow up and they finally leave the nest, and your life has literally revolved around these kids - and now they're gone or at least they are not present in the same way as they were, and you feel a profound loneliness and emptiness and you might say, "So now what am I supposed to do?"

- The marriage crashed and burned. You're carrying around a heavy load of emotional baggage. You wonder if you can ever trust again; if you can ever heal; if there can ever be a new relationship of fulfillment and joy. From out of the ashes of your life you wonder, "Now what am I supposed to do!"

- The diagnosis is that your never going to be healthy again! Your life feels like it is literally spinning out of control. Filled with anxiety, worry and fear you cry out, "So now what am I supposed to do?"

We often stand alongside those first disciples - confused, shaken, paralyze and afraid - with that look of unfocused intensity wondering, "So now what am I supposed to do?" It's easy to get stuck in the quagmire of "So now what am I supposed to do?" Like quicksand, the suction of the despair can be so great we feel like we want to give up and are slowly be pulled under.

But those first disciples didn't stay in a paralyzed stupor for long. Why? Because they were pushed, and nudged, and shoved by God to courageously move ahead.

At our place in the mountains, about this time of year we watch the mother robins push their young ones out of the nest. It almost seems cruel and unloving. The babies struggle to fly and while they are learning they are so vulnerable. But they have to learn to fly, if they don't they will die anyway.

It's no different with us. If we say stuck in the despairing place of "So now what am I supposed to do?" we will die - if not literally then emotionally and spiritually. I've seen people die like that and it's a pathetic and tragic thing!

Just moments before he vanished from their sight, Jesus had promised those beloved friends that he would still be with them. He promised them that His very own energy and presence and energy was going to come upon them and he simply would not let them get stuck. He said the Holy Spirit was going to grab a hold of them and lead them into a whole new future; move them out of their deadness, back out into the world to live the Gospel life - to live their lives in a whole new kind of way - on a whole new basis - trusting in the leading of Spirit of their best friend - Jesus Christ!

You see, no matter what the circumstances are that may be causing you today to say, "So now what am I supposed to do?" The Holy Spirit always is that invisible, yet very real presence of Christ that will take you by the hand, and ask you to trust that He - the one that had the power to raise the dead, heal the sick, cast out the demons, cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear; asking you to trust that he can do the very same for you and for me!

Look at what he did for Paul and Silas. Here they were languishing in prison after being flogged and beaten with rods. Were they feeling sorry for themselves? Were they stuck in self-pity crying, "So now what are we supposed to do?" No way!

They were singing hymns, bringing the light of the risen Christ into a very dark place. And when an earthquake blew open those prison doors, did they run away? Again, no way! they stayed and, for Christ's sake, they ministered to their jailer!

Can you imagine your life being filled with such a burning hope and such a divine energy?

You may be saying right now, "Now what am we supposed to do?" wondering if your life can ever really be the same again. Well I say, no it cannot be the same -- but it can be even better; it can be even more fulfilling than it's been. I say to you this morning trust in the same God who had the power to raise Jesus from death to move you into a new and even more glorious day! Open yourselves up to the Spirit's guidance and Spirit's leading as the risen living presence of Christ takes you by the hand, and leads you into an exciting future that maybe you cannot see so clearly at the moment, but the Holy Spirit can!

Maybe our biggest question, maybe the thing we worry about the most when we reach those "So what am I supposed to do moments?" maybe our biggest issue is: DO I HAVE A POSITIVE FUTURE? Or are the best days behind you?

Get this! I believe when it comes to faith in a risen Lord the best days, my friends, are always ahead of us - no matter what happens - because the God who raised Jesus from death and the risen Lord himself is present - always bringing new life out of our old dead stuff! It is we who decide the best days are behind and that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy!

The Holy Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ is always God's answer to us whenever we cry out, "So now what am I supposed to do?"

When you boil it down; what God promised those stuporous disciples staring intently into the empty space he had just stood, was that "yes" they had a future, and the Holy Spirit had already gone out ahead of them to the farthest ends of the earth to prepare the soil for their arrival with the Gospel message. They had a future and the Lord was already in it!

And so do you in whatever circumstances you might be in today - you have a future! Even if you are on your deathbed, the best is yet to come! That's the promise of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ! The Gospel of Jesus Christ guarantees it! The God who raised the dead Jesus, to the status of risen Lord seals it!

Amen!

Home Page of Spiritual Trails - Pastor Joseph Holub

<http://www.spiritualtrails.com/index.html>

"...the website of Joseph Holub, pastor of Holy Love Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado....This site contains sermons, devotions and many other links of Christian spirituality, learning and opportunity..."

ADDENDA

Also heard this scripture on the radio, this morning:

Living Bible

(Jer 6:16 TLB) ..."Ask where the good road is, the godly paths you used to walk in, in the days of long ago. Travel there, and you will find rest for your souls. ..."