

All The Time In The World

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Easter Sunday

Dr. Stephen D. McConnell

Many of you have been to see the Ringling Museum of Art up on the grounds of the Ringling Museum complex on 41 and University Parkway. If you have, you remember walking into the museum and being greeted by the work of Peter Paul Rubens. It's hard not to be greeted by it because it is enormous. What you find when you walk into the museum are these enormous murals painted by the great artist the dimensions of which are 18 feet by 15 feet. Incredibly large and incredibly painted. Real masterpieces featuring subjects such as the Four Gospel Writers, the Triumph of Divine Love, the Eucharist as well as others.

Now imagine with me a moment getting a call this afternoon from the curator of the museum who tells you that a discovery has been made. And what they have discovered is that one of these original paintings had been commissioned by and donated to an ancestor of yours and that now you have legal right to it. The 18 foot by 15 foot mural is now yours. And they would like to get it off their hands as soon as possible, so where could they send it? Where would you like to have it displayed? Now I am guessing that none of us would know what to say. I personally don't have a wall in my house the size of one of those murals. In fact one of those murals is about the size of my house. Now let's imagine that you are a big Peter Paul Rubens fan and that you have for years admired his work such that you would want nothing more than to take possession of this painting. But

the truth is you don't have a wall big enough for it. So now all of a sudden this unexpected gift leaves you with a choice: do I take the gift and find some way to size it down, whittle away at the edges so that it is small enough to fit onto a wall of the house in which I now reside, or do I find a house big enough to include a wall that will allow me to display this amazing gift that has been offered me. Do I size the gift small enough to be encompassed by my present dwelling – or do I find a dwelling big enough to display the enormity of the gift?

I wonder if a choice like this isn't a little bit like what you and I get presented with when we wake up on Easter morning. Because when we wake up on Easter morning and make our way to church – some of us beyond our will and against our vote – we arrive and find a group of people who themselves have been awakened on Easter morning and have been presented with the same choice. And the people I am talking about are the cast of original characters on that first Easter morning. On that first Easter morning the gospel writers tell us that a cast of unsuspecting characters were greeted with an empty tomb and with the appearances of the resurrected Jesus. An empty tomb and the appearances of the resurrected Jesus. They were presented with a picture of life as they had never seen it before. They had been presented with a view of reality that up until then did not really exist. Jesus had been raised from the dead. And now the world was a world that had resurrection in it. The world was a world that had resurrection in it. And not only was the world a world that had resurrection in it – but now their lives could be lives that had resurrection in them. Their lives could be lives that had resurrection in them. But you know resurrection is a pretty big thing. If you don't believe me – just ask someone who walks into a cemetery and sees an empty tomb and the figure of the deceased walking around. Resurrection is a very big thing. Resurrection sort of blows your mind. It blows your soul. It blows your life. If you have that kind of experience then you have a choice to make. And the choice is – are you going to try to fit something as big as the resurrection into your present life? Or will your life grow large enough to include the size and scale of what took place and what takes place on Easter morning?

Because you see I'm wondering if the resurrection isn't something like the Big Bang. We all learned about the Big Bang somewhere along the way – that likely the universe or universes got started with some type of cosmic explosion at the beginning of time – that out of nothing came this ignition and explosion that sent the particles of creation into a fiery expansion and for the longest time what we could only imagine is that this happened and within a very short period of time the universe got set, the stars got set, the planets got set and everything came to a standstill and there was nothing that needed to get bigger. But then we realized that we were mistaken – that actually the Big Bang is still banging! The universe is still expanding. The universe continues to grow larger. And I wonder if you can't say the same thing about resurrection. That on the first Easter Day when those women came to the tomb and saw what they saw – that Big Bang of new life – if what happened to them was that the resurrection took hold of them and began to expand? Because you see one of the things about the Christian story is that it is filled with people who are expanding. (Now I am not talking about Church potluck suppers when I talk about Christians expanding.) No, from the first moments of resurrection on Easter morning – the lives of those who encountered the risen Christ began to expand. They had to. You can't put the resurrection into your life unless you are willing to make room for it. And pretty much the New Testament is filled with people who couldn't help but to see their lives get bigger and bigger because of the expansion of resurrection.

Peter the denier. Thomas the doubter. Paul the persecutor. Submissive women. Frightened disciples. People living pretty small lives – and now all of sudden resurrection had come and now life was a matter of expanding the walls, raising the roofs, laying new foundations, adding additions. Why? Because resurrection had changed everything. They had been given the gift of eternity. Eternity. Do you know what eternity is? Eternity is the absence of time. Or maybe I should say that eternity is having all the time in the world. Eternity is having all the time in the world. This enormous gift of eternity had been delivered to their front door step – and now they weren't worried about time. Now they weren't having to worry about the clock anymore. Now they understood that every moment of life was pregnant with expansion. Every moment of life could be inhabited by the

expanding presence of the Holy Spirit. Every moment of life didn't have to be bound by the calendar of temporality. They weren't living the actuarial life of how long do I have before the grave. That wasn't the finish line – because now they believed in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. And now every moment grew bigger. Every hour grew bigger. Every day grew bigger because within them was resurrection and resurrection was ever expanding. You see when you are working on a deadline (isn't that an interesting word to use on Easter ... deadline) time gets short. Time gets to be something you run out of. "I ran out of time," we say. Or, "I don't have enough time." Or, "Time is short." Why? Because we have deadlines – or we have lines ahead of us that tell us when we'll be dead. And so we hurry. So we grow impatient. So we fret and worry. And we give up on the moment. We give up thinking that the moment before us, the minute before us, the hour before us, the day before us – can expand with the eternal spirit of Christ.

Don't you think that's what Jesus was trying to say when he told the story about the Good Samaritan? The man beaten on the side of the road – and what does he need, he needs for time to stop. He needs for someone to see time as eternal. He needs someone who is not on a dead-line. And so the religious people walk by – the priest and the Levite – and who knows why they don't stop except that somehow it wasn't worth their time. Because time was what they had little of they thought. But then the Samaritan seems strangely to have the time. No more time than the rest – except that eternity is in this moment. Eternity is when time stops and a beaten man's needs expand into your life. And now all of a sudden you have all the time in the world. Time to stop, time to bandage, time to put him on your animal, time to walk him to a nearby inn. Time to pay for his care. Time to come back and see how he's doing. No deadlines, it seems, not for this Samaritan.

C.S. Lewis said once, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit." Every moment with every person is an eternal moment. Every moment with every person is a resurrection moment. Jesus said whenever you take the time to visit the sick, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit a prisoner – it is as if you are spending time with the eternal and resurrected Jesus.

George Macleod, the great 20th century Scottish saint, told the story of his little girl coming into his study just before leaving on her first day ever of school. She was coming to show him her first school uniform. But the preacher was busy. He was writing letters. He was running out of time. "She came into my room," Macleod recalls, "in her first school uniform and I from my hurriedness I looked up and all I could think to say was, 'Your tie is not quite straight.' And then I realized I lost the moment. The eternal moment."

To everything, wrote the great poet of the Old Testament, to everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven –

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

...

A time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

...

A time to seek, and a time to lose;

A time to keep, and a time to throw away;

...

A time to love, and time to hate;

A time for war, and a time for peace.

Time, time, time – we want it so badly and yet when Easter brings us the gift of the resurrection what we want to do is to scale it down. Take this precious gift of eternity and whittle it down so that it can be as small as a card we put into our wallet and have with us so that when it comes to our deadline – the great deadline – we can present our eternity card and somehow enter into it.

Eternity is now, the resurrected one says. The life everlasting is now, Jesus says. And when you open your life to expand to welcome it – all of sudden your life gets bigger and more and more of those people and places and causes you don't have time for --- now there seems all the time in the world.

Marie Howe says it well in her poem, *Hurry*. Thinking about the message she sends to her daughter as she lives the frantic life, she writes –

We stop at the dry cleaners and the grocery store
and the gas station and the green market and
Hurry up honey, I say, hurry hurry,
as she runs along two or three steps behind me
her blue jacket unzipped and her socks rolled down.
Where do I want her to hurry to? To her grave?
To mine? Where one day she might stand all grown?
Today, when all the errands are finally done, I say to her,
Honey I'm sorry I keep saying Hurry—
you walk ahead of me. You be the mother.
And, Hurry up, she says, over her shoulder, looking
back at me, laughing. Hurry up now darling, she says,
hurry, hurry, taking the house keys from my hands.

Can I make you a promise this Easter? The promise is that within a short time someone in your busy scheduled life, your life of deadlines and calendars and appointments – within a short time there will

come an unexpected request of your time. It may come from your child. It may come from your parent. It may come from your neighbor. It may come from a stranger. It may come from someone hungry or thirsty. It may come from someone lonely or in prison. I promise you someone will ask for your time in a little while. It's then that we will feel the tug and the pull. And that tug and pull is the resurrected life trying to expand in you. And you will ask yourself, "Do I have all the time in the world?" And on Easter we know the answer to that question. Because we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting.