



RUNNING INTO A NEW DAY

Dr Stephen Smith, 22 February 2015

¹ *Now on the first day of the week, very early, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the place and saw that the stone had been taken away from it.*

² *Then she went running to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple who was loved by Jesus, and said to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the place of the dead and we have no knowledge where they have put him.*

³ *So Peter and the other disciple went out to the place of the dead.*

⁴ *They went running together, and the other disciple got in front of Peter and came first to the hole in the rock;*

⁵ *And looking in, he saw the linen bands on the earth; but he did not go in,*

⁶ *Then Simon Peter came after him and went into the hole in the rock; and he saw the linen bands on the earth,*

⁷ *And the cloth, which had been round his head, not with the linen bands but rolled up in a place by itself.*

⁸ *Then the other disciple who came there first went in; and he saw and belief came to him.*

John 20:1-8 (Bible in Basic English)

It wasn't a coincidence that it was Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene who run to the tomb.

Each of them represented a particular narrative in respect to their relationships with Jesus and in respect to their own journeys. Each of them had a personal journey that prompted them.

I believe wholeheartedly that it wasn't coincidence that it was Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene who first experienced the reality that the tomb was empty – the Third Day – a New Day for mankind.

They were each running for the purpose of finding what they were each missing. It wasn't ambiguous. It wasn't open-ended. It was focused. It was driven. It was specific. They were each looking for something different, and the awesomeness of what they discovered is that they each found what they needed. They each found specifically what they each needed.

We may run together, but we each find what we're each supposed to find.

Just like us. As we go through our journey, we may run together, but we each find what we're each supposed to find – meaning, when you and your running partner arrive at a specific point together, you find what you're supposed to find and he/she may find something totally different. You find what you need. Others find what they need.

Peter Ran Out of Fear

Peter's relationship with Christ really personifies many of our lives – moments of great faith, moments of great fear; high moments, low moments; valleys. It's not a continual upsurge where we personify spiritual growth continuity, where we are so inclined to embracing absolutely everything God has to offer in our lives, where we are continuously positive 24 hours a day.

We are reaffirming ourselves – during the course of the day, and during the course of our lives. There's confession, declaring and decreeing. There is a reaffirming of our families and our relationships.

Our relationship with God tends to be more like that of a ship on a rolling sea: It's full of ups and downs, and we veer off course occasionally, even when we're generally headed in the right direction.

Peter really represents that. **It's the same Peter who says, *You are the Christ!*** The reverberating affirmation that is the foundation of the Church – and who, **in the very next moment, earns the Lord's rebuke: *Satan, get thee behind me.***

It's that dichotomy that really speaks to our very existence.

At one moment, we have the greatest amount of faith in ourselves and in God. At the very next moment we find ourselves not believing in God, not believing in ourselves, not believing in our journey, not believing in our purpose.

So, for Peter to be there on the third day – a new day for mankind, on that morning three days after Christ died and was buried, for Peter to be there running toward that empty tomb, speaks volumes.

Peter displays the duality that is in all of us – brave and afraid, faithful and fearful.

²⁴ ***Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours.***

²⁵ ***Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness] that cannot wither.***

²⁶ ***Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary.***

²⁷ ***But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit].***

I Corinthians 9:24-27 (Amplified)

Who's running? It's not just Peter. It's every single human being. It's every single person who has doubted himself. It's every single person who has made some incredible affirmations and commitments and promises and then, the very next day, fell short. It's every single person who had the audacity to actually step out of the boat the way Peter did, to follow Christ and walk across the turbulent waters just as he did; but who then let fear and doubt shake him and break him and make him falter, just as Peter did, and who then, suddenly, fell in the water.

That's us. And Peter personifies it. He is everyone to whom Jesus can say, "Ye of little faith."

This is the same Peter, of course, who denied knowing Christ to save his own skin. He denied out of fear. Yet, just before that, the same Peter took out his sword and struck the soldier who came to arrest Christ, Malchus, cutting off his ear. He feared having Jesus taken away by the soldier, taken away from him. His fear caused him to act bravely. As contradictory as it seems, it's not! Peter displays the duality that is in all of us – brave and afraid, faithful and fearful.

So Peter really personifies humanity. He speaks to our lives in a very clear manner.

And when Peter ran on that day in John, chapter 20, it was faith that ran, but it was also fear. It was strength. It was weakness. It was anxiety and it was security. It was walking on water, and it was falling. It was all that and more. Peter was running in his fear, to face his trepidation and insecurity. That's who ran on that day.

John Ran in Faith

Then we have John. John is the "one whom Jesus loved." John is the one who was always close to Jesus. John, many biblical scholars agree, was one of the youngest of the disciples, undoubtedly, as he's mentioned in Scripture. John represents youthfulness, blind faith, love, the Wow Factor! John was just awestruck with the ministry and life of Jesus, and he was the faithful companion.

But I see John from another prism, in the last words of Christ on the cross. **He looks at John and He looks at Mary, his mother, and He tells John, Behold, your mother! And to Mary He says, Woman, behold, your son!**

That tells us, of course, that Jesus viewed John as part of his family.

But it also speaks to another level. He looks at John, and John represents faithfulness. John is that faithful one. John is the one who was always and continuously with Him. According to Scripture, wherever Jesus went, John was there. He was the faithful one, the beloved one.

And Mary the mother of Jesus represents holiness, virtue, purity, and perseverance.

So what Jesus is really saying is that when holiness and faithfulness are together, when faithfulness takes care of holiness and holiness takes care of fidelity and faithfulness, great things will happen.

John is the beloved. But John's identity was found completely in the life and ministry of Jesus. And when Christ was crucified, John now has this awesome responsibility. Here, for the first time, John runs for himself.

John personifies all of us who find ourselves on our own, when we are no longer in the shadow of someone else.

It's no longer in the shadow of Jesus. This is just John.

And John, in that moment, on that morning, represents the person discovering that he is on a journey without a guide. That he must find his own way. John is the person, literally and figuratively, running towards a New Day! John is the person asking: “Who am I?” When the most important person in my life, when my mission, when what gave me identity went away – who am I? Who am I when all things are pulled away and I am by myself? I don’t have anyone pointing the way for me now. I don’t have the PR machinery, and I don’t have the marketing campaign. I don’t have the infrastructure. It’s just me. And it’s me alone.

John speaks to loneliness. John speaks to solitude. That’s the John who’s running that day. The John that day is the one who says, “I’m alone. I’ve never been alone before, and now I am. For three and a half years I was always in the company of this great master, and now I am alone. What am I going to do?”

John personifies all of us who find ourselves on our own, discovering our identity. When we are no longer in the shadow of someone else. When that relationship we were part of is over. When that job that defined us is gone. When we are all alone, and we’re trying to figure out who we are outside of that relationship. When we’re trying to figure out who we are, and who we are going to be.

He was running in his loneliness. Just like so many of us.

And he was looking for an answer. Like so many of us.

But here’s something many of us could learn from John: Even though he didn’t know what the answer would be, his faith told him to keep running until he found it.

When holiness and faithfulness are together, great things will happen!