

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

APRIL 2009

THE RESURRECTION AND CHRISTIAN MISSION

BY TIM KELLER

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

— Matthew 28:18-20

The passage above is not generally considered an “Easter text.” But if we look carefully, I think we might find that it has more to do with Easter than is first apparent.

The famous “Great Commission” of Matthew 18:18-20 is almost always studied in isolation from the rest of the chapter. We can only understand it fully when we remember that this charge to the church is from the *risen* Christ. One way to do this is to

look earlier in the chapter at the angel’s claim—*He is not here!* And in response ask—“All right, then where *is* the risen Christ?” Matthew 28:18-20 is answer. Where is the Christ, now that he is risen?

First, he is at the right hand of God. “*All authority is given me*” (v.18). He is not merely ‘in heaven looking down.’ Rather, he is now in a position to exercise power in the world and history. He is spreading his kingdom—authority in the world through the ministry of the church.

Second, he is in the ministry of the gospel. “*Go and make disciples*” (v.19). As the gospel is preached, it changes men and women into disciples. This life-changing ministry is intimately connected to the risen Christ. (*All authority is*

given me, therefore go...) In Ephesians 2:17 Paul goes so far as to say to the Ephesians that “*Christ came and preached...to you*” though the physical incarnate Christ never went to Asia Minor. Paul means that in the preaching of the gospel, Jesus comes to us.

Third, he is in the community of his people. “*Surely I am with you.*” (v.20). When the risen Christ says, “*I am with you*” he uses a second-person plural. The risen Christ is with ‘you-all.’ This is not promise to the individual Christian, but to the community of believers. In Luke 24, the disciples on the road to Emmaus only discerned Christ ‘in the breaking of the bread.’ Luke is probably drawing a reference to the Lord’s Supper. In the corporate worship

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VOLUNTEERS “REACH” OUT TO SERVE OUR CONGREGATION

Kep your eyes and ears open for “REACH”: our upcoming Volunteer Awareness Day on April 26. On this day we call special attention to the faithful work of our Sunday volunteers—the

people who regularly give of their time each Sunday in order to ensure that our services run smoothly. After each worship service there will be a Ministry Fair where you can learn more

about our various ministry areas, and can sign up to serve with one of them! In the meantime, please join us in thanking God for the people who are willing to serve our congregation every Sunday.



INSIDE:

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YOUTH GROUP RESTAURANT NIGHT A SUCCESS

BY CREGAN COOKE

We are pleased to report that the youth group was able to raise over \$3500 (after costs) at "Restaurant Night"! These funds bring us half way to our goal to provide lunch (rice, beans, and a banana) three times a week for one year for the orphan students of TAOST School in Jinja, Uganda. There are ~100 students orphaned by AIDS enrolled at TAOST school and this will be the first time for many of these children to receive a nutritious (or any) lunch on a regular basis. The

response to the evening was excellent as we filled our "restaurant" to capacity. Since we were able to raise half of the needed funds for a full year of lunches, we plan to hold additional fundraisers to fund the balance of the program. If you or a friend are interested in making a gift to help us, please go to: www.redeemer.com/ugandadonations and make a donation.

The evening was a lot of hard work for many of our youth group's lay leaders and students,

and we want to give special thanks to all the leaders and students who helped coordinate the evening!

Finally, thank you to all the people who supported us with your gifts and participation. We are exceedingly grateful for the relationship God has given us with the teachers and students of this school and for the generous support the congregation has provided to make this part of our ministry possible.

EASTER WEEK 2009 AT REDEEMER

Thursday, April 9: *Mark's Gospel* performed by Max McLean

Ethical Culture Society, 64th and Central Park West
7:30PM Free admission

Friday, April 10: Good Friday – 4 services

Meditations on the last words of Jesus with contemplative string quartet music.

East Side: 5:30PM and 7:00PM at All Souls Church, 80th and Lexington

West Side: 5:30PM and 7:00PM at First Baptist Church, 79th and Broadway

To request childcare for ages 0-5 yrs, please email carolyn@redeemer.com with service, names, and ages of children

Sunday, April 12: Easter Sunday – 6 services

Please note special worship schedule

9:00AM at Ethical Culture Society (brass and choir)

9:45AM and 11:30AM at Hunter College Auditorium (orchestra, choir and soloists)

5:00PM and 7:15PM at First Baptist Church (jazz band and soloists)

6:00PM at Hunter College Auditorium (jazz band and soloists)

For more information, visit www.redeemer.com

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington) services at 10:30AM • 6:00PM	ETHICAL CULTURE West 64TH and CPW service at 9:15AM	FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH Corner of West 79TH and Broadway service at 5:00PM & 7:15PM
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GOD'S EASTER GIFT

BY HOWARD FREEMAN

While many of us consider Christmas to be the ultimate gift-giving occasion, it's worth considering that Easter trumps it.

Across human history, different cultures have given gifts for different reasons. One ancient conviction still practiced today in some tribal cultures is the notion that "a gift is property that perishes," as Lewis Hyde says in *The Gift*. That is, one gives a gift with no expectation other than it will be used up completely, whether it is food to be consumed, or a prized treasure to be passed from one family to another, or one generation to another. (This happens even within our own family traditions.)

Likewise, we heard in the January sermon on Genesis 4 how Cain and Abel's gifts ("offerings") to God differed. Abel's gift was from the first-born of his flocks, while "in the course of time" Cain gave "some" of his fruits. While both brothers' gifts was irrevocable (akin to "property that perishes"), we learned that Abel gave a "better sacrifice" from a position of faith (Hebrews 11:4), not knowing whether he would have more offspring from his flock. Moreover, Cain's response demonstrated that his offering was given with an expectation of God's blessing.

Yet on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, we see the manifestation

of John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The Father comes in the person of Jesus Christ to be a gift "that perishes" on the cross. Yet, because of Jesus' resurrection three days later and our repentance made possible by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is our living hope, and we do not have to perish (2 Peter 3:9). The free gift to us of Good Friday and Easter Sunday is the Good News, and it is news we can share from family to family, generation to generation.

As we celebrate Easter, let's remember to pass along the gifts we've been given.

REDEEMER BEGINS...

BY KATHY KELLER

Twenty years ago, on April 4, 1989, Redeemer Presbyterian Church held its first worship service. We met at the Church of the Advent Hope, at 111 East 87th Street, a Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which worships on Saturdays, and which would be Redeemer's home for the next four years.

Tim and I were still living in Philadelphia with the boys, who at that time were eleven, nine and five years old. We commuted (with one son at a time!) to New York weekly to meet for prayer with people who had shown an interest in helping to begin a new church, one that would be "for people who don't like church." We wanted to avoid the usual model of "church planting," where one says "Finally, if I get in on the ground floor of this new church I can make sure it's the way I've always wanted a church

to be." Rather than that inward focus, Redeemer was from the beginning outwardly focused.

When it became apparent that people were just too eager to wait for the fall to begin services, we decided to start in April, even though we wouldn't be moving to New York for another two months. For that reason, and also to allow people to "try out" Redeemer, we scheduled the service for 6:00 p.m. (Didn't you always wonder why the jazz band was called "The Six O'clock Band"?)

Tim worked on a sermon—Jesus our Lawyer, we think it was—and I produced a bulletin, an introductory brochure, found a pianist, bought bagels and coffee and coffee urns and all that went with a hospitality hour. When the time came for the service and no one but us was there we said, "Well, there it is. God isn't in this.

We'll pack up and go home." (No one had explained the New Yorker's peculiar relationship to start times, something to do with public transportation as much as with ambivalence.)

Ten minutes later the pews had about 90 people in them, enough to look not-entirely-empty. My memories of that service have been so overlaid with memories of subsequent services that I don't have a clear picture of any of it, except the drive home. We were in a state of mild shock, (it was really happening), fear (it was really happening), and exultation (it was really happening.)

There would be other milestones in 1989 (which we will mention from time to time in the newsletter and elsewhere) but that was the first. And I don't think we've ever gotten over the shock, fear, and exultation.



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HOPE FOR NEW YORK EASTER SACRIFICIAL OFFERING: SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2009

Each Easter Redeemer receives a special offering for Hope for New York (HFNY), the outward facing ministry of Redeemer and an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. **100% of the offering** received is given in the form of direct grants to HFNY's affiliate organizations that serve the poor and marginalized throughout New York City.

We need your help this year more than ever. The current economic climate has caused a significant increase in the need for services for homeless and low-income individuals and families across our city. They are the most vulnerable, and the needs are becoming increasingly more urgent and essential. Please prayerfully consider your sacrifi-

cial gift this Easter. **This special collection will be made during ALL Easter Services.** You may also make a donation online at www.hfny.org/donate. **Or you can mail a donation, making checks payable to "Hope for New York,"** 1359 Broadway, Suite 410, New York, NY 10018. Thank you.

THE RESURRECTION AND... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

of the church, Christ comes into focus. In the ministry of Christians to one another, loving, serving, confronting, comforting one another, using the spiritual gifts from the hand of the risen Christ—we experience his presence.

Lastly, he is waiting for us at the end of history. *"I am with you...to the very end of the age"* (v.20). The old KJV translation says, *"I am with you unto the end of the world."* To the English reader

that may seem to have a spatial reference; (i.e. "I'll be with you no matter where you go in the world,") but actually the word has to do with time. Jesus is thus promising to be the 'happy ending' of the world's history and our personal history. Christians move out into a violent world as agents of peace, into a broken world as agents of reconciliation, into a needy world as servants of the poor. We do so knowing that it is

God's will to eventually end all war and division, all poverty and injustice. The resurrection of Christ assures us that God will redeem not just souls but bodies, and will bring about a new heavens and new earth. As the risen Christ, he stands not just with us in our present time, but he waits at the end of history to heal and renew everything. That is his promise. Therefore, we will not fear.