

“The Greatest Comeback of All Time”

Luke 24:1-8

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Easter

I couldn't believe it. There it was in Sports Illustrated, hardly a religious publication. The editors published an article titled, "Top Ten Comebacks of All Time." The list was not limited to sporting events, but covered a wide range of topics and people.

Elvis made the list for resurrecting his sagging career in 1968. Muhammad Ali made the list when he reclaimed the heavyweight title after a seven-year exile from the ring. Harry Truman made the cut because of his 1948 victory over Thomas Dewey when all the polls had him losing by a wide margin. Of course, Michael Jordan was on the list for his return to the NBA.

Do you know what they listed as the greatest comeback of all time? The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Like I said earlier, I was stunned. I never expected to see this in a Sports Illustrated article. Naturally, I thought the editors would list a sporting event as their top comeback.

They were right, though. The greatest comeback of all time was the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel writers were careful to tell us that Jesus was not only tortured and crucified but dead and buried. He was gone and so were his followers' hopes and dreams.

But then, some women that had gone to the tomb to grieve and add spices to his body discovered it was empty. Two angels told them that Jesus was alive and even asked them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" This question led to the most wonderful day of their lives as Jesus began appearing to his disciples, assuring them of his love for them and giving them instructions about continuing their good work.

Ever been on a ball team that fell behind, way behind and yet came back to win the game? The taste of victory was even sweeter because of the spice of surprise, wasn't it? I think that was how these early disciples felt. The element of surprise added to their joy.

What's the message of Easter for us today? I think it is this. **Easter is about things going wrong and things going right.** It is about sorrow turned into joy and defeat turned into victory. It is about overcoming.

Helen Keller, who was blind and deaf, said, "Life is about suffering and the overcoming of it." She knew this first hand, didn't she?

We know what it is like for things to go wrong, don't we? We know what it is like to have shattered dreams and feel great disappointment. Each Sunday in our sanctuary there are individuals whose marriage has ended in divorce, job has been terminated, health has started declining, children have gotten into trouble, car has broken down or loved one has died.

I hope you find comfort in knowing that Jesus understands. He knows what it is like for things to go wrong. He knows what disappointment and heartbreak are all about. As he looked over the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he cried and said, "If you, even

you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes” Luke 19:41.

Easter is about things going wrong. It is about good people being killed, truth being shattered, potential being squandered, love being ignored, peace being denied and cowards being rewarded. In some ways, Easter is about all the wrong things. But, there are times when our lives are that way too, or at least it seems that way.

However, Easter is also about things going right. It is about comebacks. It is about overcoming. It certainly was for Jesus. The crucified Savior became the risen Lord. God did not send another Messiah but resurrected the first and only one.

What hope this gives me! To know that life is not over when I think it is over is comforting. To know that death and disappointment will not have the final word in my life is reassuring. To know that with God’s help, I can come back after a divorce, a bankruptcy, a terrible diagnosis or even a tragic loss is exciting.

Do comebacks really happen in our world, though? Ask Elizabeth Smart’s family, Jessica Lynch’s parents or the family members that were reunited yesterday in Texas with the seven POWs captured and held in Iraq. Yes, comebacks occur all around us and they can happen in your life, too, if you will place your faith and future in the hands of the one whose resurrection from the dead we celebrate today.