

“Two of the Best Movies I’ve Seen”

Luke 24:1-12

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Easter Sunday

Two of the best movies I’ve ever seen were *Gone with the Wind*. The first time I saw this movie, I began collecting my belongings after Scarlett returned to Tara and with clinched fists raised toward heaven declared, “As God is my witness, they are not going to lick me! I’m going to live through this, and when it is all over, I’ll never be hungry again—no, nor any of my folks!” It seemed like a logical place to end a movie. However, Jackie grabbed my arm and firmly but politely told me that there was more, much more. The movie was only half over and the best was yet to come. “But I’m out of popcorn,” I said. “Go get some more,” was her reply.

When you read the end of Luke 23, you get the feeling that the story about Jesus is over. Joseph of Arimathea took his body off the cross, wrapped it in linen and placed it in a tomb. It was time for everyone to gather his or her belongings and move on with their lives. The life and ministry of Jesus provided them with some exciting experiences and warm memories, but there would be no more. Jesus died and was buried. His life was over but theirs must continue. It was time for everybody to move on.

It was also time for Luke to conclude his book. He composed a fine account of Jesus’ life and ministry, including many of his parables, but it was time to write the final chapter and end this historical diary. Every good author knows that ending a book in a timely manner is as important as beginning it in an attention getting way. Luke needed to give Jesus a proper burial and bring closure to the story.

Perhaps this is what his readers expected and maybe they started gathering their belongings as they read about the women witnessing Jesus’ burial. Can you imagine their surprise as they scrolled down and read, “*But, on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*” Maybe there is more, they think and continue reading with anticipation.

“They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!’ ” Luke 24:2-6a.

What exciting and hopeful words these were. Evidently, the story of Jesus’ life and ministry was not over as they thought and to their delight it was not. There was more, much more and the best was yet to come.

Before last week, I paid little attention to the first word of Luke 24. It is the simple word, “**but,**” a conjunction that means the story is not over. It discourages us from gathering our belongings and preparing to leave because there is more. It encourages us to sit still and hear the rest of the story.

This same Jesus that was crucified and buried rose from the dead and returned to his disciples. He continued teaching and encouraging them until he ascended to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to live in their hearts forever. What a difference that little

conjunction made in their lives and ours! *“But on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.”* Where would we be without that conjunction and the rest of the story?

Now that I know this, let me tell you what the Easter message is for me this year. **Easter means that the end is not the end.** Just because I think the end is apparent doesn't mean it is. Even though I cannot see anything else doesn't mean there is nothing else. Easter means there is always more and it is good.

Do you recall a most dramatic scene in Mel Gibson's movie, “The Passion of the Christ?” when Jesus fell under the heavy load of the cross and saw his mother kneeling close by him? Immediately, Gibson showed a flashback of a time when Jesus fell as a child and Mary ran to his aid. Now, she could not assist him but heard him say, “Behold, I make all things new.”

What a strange thing for Gibson to have Jesus say at that moment. What do you think Gibson was trying to communicate? Perhaps it was that **“the end is not the end.”** There is more and it will even be better.

I think it is important to point out that Easter does not mean that bad never happened and pain was not real. Neither does it mean that everything wrong will be reversed as if it never occurred or all things broken will be fixed as if they never were damaged. No, Easter does not deny reality but creates new reality. It acknowledges pain, grief and despair and then replaces them with joy and hope.

Perhaps you are here today and you have buried a loved one, gone through a divorce, lost a job, received a bad health report, flunked out of college, declared bankruptcy or moved away from family and friends. You are languishing in the mist of depressing grief and despair. You think life is over or at least forever flawed and limited. Is there a word from the Lord for you today? Yes, and He wants you to hear it clearly.

Your life is not over nor will the rest of your days be filled with grief and despair. The risen Lord is here to start writing a new chapter to your life, one that will be filled with meaning, purpose, joy and happiness. So go ahead and turn the page. What's the first word you read? “But...” Read on because you will like the ending!

I suppose the hottest television show this year is American Idol. Thousands of young people from all over the country audition to be the next heart throb. The final twelve begin the process of singing on television each week followed by people calling in to register their vote for the best. The one with the least amount of votes is eliminated from the competition. Currently, they are down to nine, I think.

I watched the show last week. A young lady from Hawaii was eliminated. Needless to say, she was crushed and crying. The master of ceremonies asked two of the judges, Randy and Paula, if they had any words of advice for this heartbroken singer. They shared similar words of wisdom.

“Your dreams do not need to end tonight. Just because you will not continue on this show does not mean you need to abandon your pursuit of a singing career. Learn from this experience and turn it into something positive. We want to hear from you down the road.”

“The end is not the end.” Just because I cannot see anything else does not mean there is nothing else. Easter tells me there is more and it is good. Thank you, Lord, thank you!