

“How can you read the words and not see the picture?” I think that’s what she said. The question took me by surprise and I didn’t quite know how to answer. The inquiry came from one of the elementary school children in a recent chapel service. I was teaching about the empty tomb report of the Resurrection and how surprising it must have been for the people who first visited the grave. They expected to find the dead body of Jesus. But they found it empty. We had a lively discussion about how the stone may have been rolled away and I even suggested that the stone may have been rolled away, not by the hands of men, but by the power of God. Perhaps it was not so much that Jesus could get out, but that we could see in! For how can one really trap God, or keep him shut up in any place, even sealed off in a tomb? I was rather impressed by that theological point which, by the way, is not original with me. Then one of the students pointed to one of banners on the wall as she said, “See the picture!”

I turned around and looked behind me at the banner which reads *He’s Alive!* which hangs on the wall above the stage. As I stared, I suddenly saw it. On the banner along with the words is the picture. There’s a black spot representing the open space of the empty tomb with the stone rolled away. A dove is winging its way out of the tomb, per someone’s artistic representation and thoughtful contemplation. As my eyes lingered on the words and the image on the banner, I was stunned at what I had never seen. I had never seen the empty tomb on that banner. Someone spent a lot of time, long before the beginning of my time here at Mount Olivet, to communicate not only the words’ but also the picture. I turned around and faced the students and confessed, “I’ve been here at Mount Olivet over five years and have read the words on that banner but have never noticed the empty tomb!” To which another student exclaimed, “How can you read the words and not see the picture?” You have to be careful what you confess in elementary chapel. They’ll preach to you!

I’ve been letting that question simmer in my mind. How is it possible that I can read the words *He’s Alive!* and not see the picture? For one thing, these words, expressed from one faithful follower of Jesus to another, may have become so familiar to us that they have lost the wonder of it all. Imagine first hearing the news that the tomb was empty and someone had actually seen and touched Him. I may have said this in a whisper at first’ then exploded in a joyous crescendo like some great symphonic climax, *He’s Alive!* I don’t know about you but I suspect I am not alone in the following thought. As I write this, I am impressed and convicted of the truth of how many times I may have read the words on the pages of the Word of the Living God and not seen the picture. I have processed and stored these words and retained factual message for information transmission and missed the faithful message that is given for our transformation. Too many times I have missed the picture’ *He’s Alive!* The picture, the story that God tells, took a lot of time and meticulous inscription through many different times, cultures, and people, to tell us that He who lived from forever died one time and now lives forever. *He’s Alive!!!* Get the picture?

The next question this one leads to is, *Why would He do that?* In our next chapel, I think I’ll ask the elementary students. Perhaps you’ll join me’ no telling what you can learn there. Maybe you know some students who would benefit from such exposure to the words’ and the pictures’ at Celebration Christian Academy. I have come to think of these students as the pastor’s think tank. Elementary thinkers are powerful thinkers. I need to keep reading the words and thinking about the message. Read the Word’ See the Picture’ It’s all about Jesus.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam