

“Not everyone knows it. Do you?” Mt 28:1-10

“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

He is risen. He is risen, indeed!

O, yes, we know what to say. But stop for a while! What is this that we are saying? Part of our liturgy? Our secret code which only Christians can understand? Is this something that everyone knows, or this is something that only we know?

I would propose that today we meditate about three things. First. What is this that everyone knows? Second. What is this that *not* everyone knows? Third. What to do about it? What is this that everyone know, what it this that not everyone knows, and what to do about it?

Let’s begin with what everyone knows. At least to some extent. There are universal phenomena that are common to entire human race. It doesn’t matter where you were born, in what culture you were raised.

First. Accountability. We all know about it. All, meaning all people. We all have this voice within us, speaking independently of us. Our conscience. Sometimes accusing us, sometimes excusing. But the point is – this voice doesn’t belong to us. It speaks against desires of our hearts. What is this voice? Who can be inside me, knowing all my thoughts and desires?

I had a friend, very influential businessman. He wasn’t anything like what we’d call spiritual or religious person. But once, having dinner in a nice restaurant, having chat about this or that, he said that he believes, that he kind of knows that at the end of our days we all will have to give an account for how we have spent our time here.

He knew what we all know, we are accountable. This accountability permeates everything in our lives. We try to justify our every step, even if we are not asked to. We try to justify our existence, our lives, to prove that we are somebody.

Exactly as it is written by apostle Paul, that we know that ‘the law is written on our hearts, while our conscience also bears witness, and our conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse us.’ (Rom 2:14-15)

Then, there is this notion, that there is something higher. Someone who stands behind everything that exists, someone to whom we all are accountable. Some kind of higher being, some sort of higher reality. That’s why in all languages, in all [!] languages there is the word ‘god’. And the very idea of god is related with creation, God the Creator.

This is something we sense when we look at beauty of creation, mountains, ocean, flowers, birds, sunsets, when we look at skies at night. There are moments when we can literary feel it, when we want to be joined with Him, to be immersed, to be united, to be one.

Everyone has experienced it. In one way or another. Exactly as it is written: “What can be known about God is plain to all, because God has shown it to us. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” (Rom 1:19-20)

But then there is this another phenomena. Eternity. We have it engraved on our hearts. Again, we can literary feel that this life is not all that there is. There has to be more. There has to be continuation. Babies may have this sense in mother’s womb. They know that there is something more, out there. Someone, who loves them, loves them infinitely.

We can observe our bodies aging. There is not much we can do. But at the same time we can also observe that our self-consciousness remains the same. It doesn’t age. We all know it. Again, exactly as it is written: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.” (Ec. 3:11)

You see, what we have been talking so far, this is something everyone knows. Literary everyone in human race. Some more consciously, some less, but these are common experiences of humanity. Where do they lead us? What happens when we have these universal experiences?

We need to make sense of them. Then - religion happens. Yes, religion. When people put together these experiences, that we feel this accountability, that there is something higher, that there has to be something after this life. What happens? We

need to come up with some sort of solution that would help us to account for these experiences, but even more important - to deal with them on daily bases.

This is how all religions and ideologies and life philosophies have come into being. All of them. This is a definition of religion. Human attempts to deal with these universal experiences. Some of religions and ideologies have the concept of God in them, some don't.

But they all try to make sense of these universal experiences, coming up with different principles that would help us to live a life in a decent way keeping in picture both our accountability and notion that there is Someone Higher. That's a story of our world. People pick one that sounds good and fits their taste and use it. Or don't. Whatever. As you wish. This is what people do.

Here we come to our second question. What is this that we, Christians know? We know what is the difference between Christianity and all religions and ideologies and life philosophies of the world, past, present, and future.

This is the difference - Christianity is not a human attempt to cope with these universal phenomena of our existence. Entire Christian worldview, the way we deal with these universal experiences, the way we explain them is based on events. Yes, on historical event. Remember it, remember it forever!

The Bible consists mostly of eyewitness testimonies about events they witnessed. About real event in real history, in our history. In our reality, seen and experienced by real people in real time and real places. That is the difference. Christianity is not a religion. It is not a human attempt to make sense of the world around us.

Because, if it was a human attempt, then it would be the most foolish attempt ever. Almost everything in Biblical message sounds wrong. Especially when we come to the very central events, to the very core of Biblical message, to life, sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To the event that we celebrate today.

You know what people like, what people strive for in this world: power, riches, wisdom, peace, fame, sex, having good life, happiness, feeling good about ourselves, and so on.

Now, let's take a look what we have in the Gospel. How well does it fit to these human interests? God, the Creator of Universe became man. God became man?! Why? He was born to a virgin. [?] He lived in small village no one knew about. He worked as a carpenter...

Then He had a few disciples, which basically abandoned Him when hard times came. Then He was crucified and died. Then He rouse again in body. Rouse again, and appeared to whom? To women? What a nonsense! At that time women

couldn't even give a testimony in court. No one would listen to them. Then He told His disciples that they need to go and to tell all of this to all nations, and to make disciples.

By the way, He also mentioned that they will be poor, rejected, persecuted, that they won't have too many joys of this world, that they need to forget about themselves and to love and serve sacrificially others with all they have, and then He ascended into heaven.

Yes, and He said that He will come back later, and will put all things straight. That there will be a new creation, a new earth and a new heaven, perfect in goodness, without pain, sufferings and death, all this in His presence.

What kind of a religion is this? Who can come up with such a story and hope that anyone will believe it? As we said, if it was a human attempt, then it would be the most foolish attempt ever.

Unless, unless... all of this is true. Unless because we rejected God in His wisdom, "it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (1Co 1:21)

How do we know this is true? How do we know anything? Through testimonies of others. In this case we have the testimonies of eyewitnesses. This is what our four gospel accounts are.

After His resurrection Jesus appeared to several hundred of His disciples, most of whom were still alive when the books of the New Testament were written. From His twelve apostles eleven died as martyrs in painful death only because they kept testifying about what they had experienced, about this unbelievable story.

Christianity is not a religion. It is not a human attempt to make sense of the world around us. It is God's attempt to explain us all these universal experiences. God not just makes sense of these universal human experiences, but also provides their fulfilment for which all human beings are longing in their hearts. For we are created to for something much, much greater. What do I mean by this?

We all know that we are accountable. We have this voice inside us. Our conscience. It tells that there is someone who knows our deepest desires and our secret thought. Now we know that this someone is our Creator, our God, our Father in heaven, who is always present with us. Gently keeping us in check.

Think about it for a while, how scary is this that someone knows everything that you have been thinking about. That to someone this all is revealed, nothing remains hidden.

Someone who knows you even better than yourself, and He is going to evaluate you on these bases. Not what you have done, but what you are deep inside, in depth of your heart.

For “out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.” (Mar 7:21-22) Your thought will be evaluated as your deeds. It is a terrifying reality, and it is coming. For all.

If we don't know what God's attitude to us is, then our accountability makes us to assume that God can be perceived only as the Ultimate Judge and His only interest in us is, - to point to our failures and deficiencies. That's why we try to avoid Him.

But now, the same One, who knows you better than you do, your Creator, your Ultimate Judge has revealed Himself, His Fatherly heart and His attitude towards you. What is His attitude? Deepest acceptance and most affectionate love. How many would accept you and love you unconditionally knowing everything you have in your heart?

Your God, your Creator and Heavenly Father knows all of this. He knows you fully and knows that on your own you will fail your evaluation miserably. In His acceptance and love your Heavenly Father provides solution for this situation where we can't do nothing.

He offers you forgiveness. He takes all your failures upon Himself. He takes all your accusations, all your sins, all your wrongs upon Himself, all that has been in your past is forgiven and forgotten, He gives you a new heart, renewed mind, restored by His love and passion for you. It is not a cheap gift, it was bought by Jesus' death, by God pouring Himself out fully for your sake.

He does all of this for you, and He invites you into His house to come into His holy presence, among other forgiven sinners, so that He could bless you in countless ways. That's what He desires. To fulfill the deepest desires of your hearts.

We begin to experience this transformation, this renewed life already here, but then comes the ultimate fulfillment. Eternity. It is true! As Jesus rose from the dead, we'll be raised as well. In new glorified bodies, being as perfect as our Creator and Father designed us, being invited in His heavenly feast. Not as strangers, but as His family members. And this is never going to end. This is our ultimate hope.

Such is the fulfillment for our desire for eternity. “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined... God has prepared for those who love him.” (1Co 2:9)

You see, these are not some kind of principles to argue about, this is not a religion to sell. This is the history to be told. Told to all. That true God loves everyone, accepts everyone, comes to us not as judge, but as Savior, pouring Himself out so that we can receive what He has prepared for us. This is what we as Christians know.

Last question. What to do about it? There are still so many who don't know it. Who haven't heard this story, or have heard it distorted, of half told, of haven't got it. This is our Easter message and we have to share it. Jesus sent women to His disciples. He sent His disciples to all nations. His disciples made new disciples and sent them. They again the next generation, and the next, and the next.

Today, almost two millennia later I stand before you to do nothing else than just to retell you this story. To remind you about what God has done for you. What He has intended and prepared for you. To extend His invitation that never expires and is meant for all people. For all, and for you.

What now? Let's go and share this story. That God comes to everyone, to give a good conscience, to assure that because of what Jesus did you are forgiven and accepted, that God gives you Himself with all that He has, and desires to bring you into His eternal Kingdom to enjoy eternal joy in His presence. This is as universal message as it could be.

Let's go and share it. For He is risen, and you'll be too.

Amen.