

I was trying to think when I ran the fastest in my life, and I bet it was at seminary. And no, it wasn't because the administration on campus put us through some rigorous exercise program in the off-chance it might, actually, improve our long-term health; making us run on treadmills to enhance our cardio in between classes, or something. Instead, it was because one early evening during my second year there, I got a phone call from my mom. She said my grandfather had just suffered a stroke and was taken to a nearby hospital in Westerville. Except, by the time she called, it turned out to be a mini-stroke, he was stable, my uncle was already with him in the ER. Looking back, it's not like I could have done anything for him right there and then anyway. There wasn't some "miracles" class at the seminary, teaching us how to keep the water-into-wine, healing-instantaneously, walk-on-water holy things going long after Jesus pulled them all off. It's not like I took any med school classes on the side, either. Nevertheless, I ran, as if my grandfather's world depended on it.

Evidently, long ago, Peter ran as well. He didn't need to, necessarily. It's not like the whole rising-from-the-dead, most holy thing, depended on him getting there in a few minutes, a few hours, a few days. Jesus didn't *need* Peter there. Neither did any of us thousands of years later. The future of the

church universal was not going to be determined on whether Peter got there within a certain timeframe to witness what was already brought to life for the whole world. Nevertheless, Peter ran, as if *his* world depended on it.

And, of course, Peter walks into a completely empty room with absolutely zero life present. It's just that all the life in God's holy arsenal had just been unleashed all over the universe from that very spot, where the Lord of Life had just been lying there in a room all by Himself. Somehow, somehow, as a Resurrection miracle only can: an empty room brings about amazement for Peter that sets the stage for *hope* to take on a completely different meaning for all rooms that feel so incredibly empty for the rest of eternity.

When I got to that hospital in Westerville, it was the first time that I can remember having to go any ER registration desk by myself asking to see a loved one. Oddly enough, even in a place with so many people running around as if people's worlds depend on them, it can still feel rather empty. Granted, my grandfather was doing fine by then, but such a space has its own way of reminding us of our human vulnerability: that our bodies are far from perfect, not to mention being completely dependent on the work of doctors

and nurses and medical technicians, working behind the scenes beyond any control of your own.

Now, one thing I did learn at seminary while *not* learning about turning water into wine or improving our physical workout regiment, I did learn to be comfortable with pro-longed awkward silence. Sure, that night I threw in some random thoughts about that side of the family's favorite, but god-awful, Cincinnati Reds or whatever was on the television screen right there and then, even the latest successes of my nieces and nephews, his great-grandchildren. And yet, sometimes, whether it be in medical establishments or throughout a variety of life circumstances: all you can do is sit there in silence, as you wait for test results or a phone call or someone to walk in not just to a room, but into your life. Sometimes, that silence, that near-emptiness feeling, is a humbling reminder of another piece of the Greatest News that emerges from that *empty* tomb.

Yes, no matter how fast Peter got to that sacred Resurrection spot, he in, no way, impacted whether Christ rose from the dead or not. That was already more than taken care of, to say the least. And yet, just as true: no matter how fast Peter ran and started telling everyone that the women *did* have it right all along: that Christ *was* Risen indeed; the world had already been saved. It was

not dependent on Peter from there on out. It is not dependent on us, either, no matter how much we think so highly of ourselves, that the fate of the entire world is resting on our shoulders. The Resurrection reality is not determined by us.

Still, throughout this life, we walk into our fair share of empty rooms, sometimes, even, when there is a mass crowd of people; for there remains this hollow feeling within us, because there's another room with a family illness or job worries or wondering what is going on with in plenty of other rooms throughout the world around us. Come to think of it, there is a reason why the tomb was empty when Peter got there, and not just because Jesus rose from the dead, but because Jesus wasn't going to wait around for humanity to get there. He had more ministry to do. He had more empty rooms to walk into with a joy to fill entire mansions. He had more empty hearts to invade with a compassion and hope and love to convince us to not just go along this life with no speed at all, as if there was nothing worth fighting for anymore. This Resurrected Christ did not die and rise for such minimal care over the world He just pulled off the eternal miracle for, after all.

So, no, we can't just carelessly walk about thinking someone else will take care of it, "I wasn't trained for that," "I have nothing to offer," "What

good can I bring to any room I come into?” Instead, we run: we move forward with conviction as if this world is still worth dying and rising for, as if this Risen Lord and Savior is, in fact, still alive and well in the world; and not just interspersed here and there in sanctuaries and cathedrals, but in the not-so-empty-space-anymore of our very hearts.

Jesus couldn't wait around for Peter to show up. He had us to go to, He had to get started in convincing us that even if we just sit there in a room with loved ones and say nothing at all, if we just are there with only minimal random comments to make, we are with them. It may not change the entire world, but it will make their part of it that much better. We are the precious glimpse, the holy reminder of God's leave-the-tomb-behind love: that no one in this life is meant to go through it alone. The Resurrection was not unleashed for loneliness or fear or hopelessness to last. God will not allow it. We don't walk with such Great News. We run as if the world still needs some blessed reassurance that Christ is still Risen indeed, not just for us; for them, for the whole world. And for that Greatest News of all that has already been brought to life in the Risen Christ, we give thanks to God indeed! Amen!