

## **Easter Morn: He is Risen**

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia. Every year we proclaim again and afresh that Jesus was resurrected from death to life. It is an audacious and extravagant claim. And if it is true then it changes everything.

St John's gospel gives a beautiful account of the first glimpse of the risen Jesus. In the light of dawn he is discernibly physical and yet somehow not recognisable. Was it only bad lighting, or tear filled eyes, that confused one of his most loving and intimate followers to be less than certain about who he was?

John's gospel is thought to have been written down last, maybe as much as 70 years after the events it describes. It is unlikely that a small practical mistake would have been so lovingly preserved. This moment of uncertainty before the sureness of recognition is more likely to have been kept as part of the tradition because it rings so deeply true.

Mary, as one of the faithful disciples and followers, had been decimated by his arrest and death. She comes to the tomb expecting only the small comfort of being able to properly treat the body of her beloved Lord.

The author of this gospel account wants us to experience the moment of recognition of the risen Jesus and the beginning of everything that is to mean for Mary, for the disciples, and for the followers to come, and for humankind. In response to the familiar voice Mary perceives that Jesus who died on the cross, who was buried in a tomb, is alive and in front of her.

She is able to recognise him because he first knows her and identifies himself to her. In response to his greeting she is then able to see with eyes that not only make out physical the shapes of what is in front of her but eyes that recognise the impossible. She is now seeing with the eyes of faith as well as with human eyes.

All of us, to be people of faith, must experience this moment when we can see what is in front of us and what it really means. What eyes and hearts of faith discern is that nothing less than everything changed because of this event. That we divide history into Before Christ and After his Death is a small sign of what we understand to have happened. That the world as it was ended with his death and a New Age began with his Resurrection.

Jesus' Resurrection is then for us a promise and a pathway. He is the first fruit. He has gone before us where we will one day go.

But Resurrection is not only a historical event and a future promise. Resurrection can be our experience now in the many deaths and endings of our lives. Resurrection, life out of death,

is a deeply human experience. Our own and other's lives bare witness to that capacity to resurrect a new life out of great loss.

But the resurrection of Jesus was not just the historical event of one man, way back then. Although it was certainly that. Nor is it only a psychological or spiritual event for the individual believer. Although it is certainly that as well. In the language of the prophet: God intends a new thing - the creation of a new heaven a new earth. And the coming of this new heaven and new earth require that we experience resurrection as a community, as a species, as an interconnected creation.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus we claim that everything is different and yet the evidence of the evening news is contrary. Everywhere the world still is at war – depending on how one counts these things there are 35 wars being waged around the world at the moment. Children still die everyday from hunger and preventable childhood diseases – 50,000 per day. And we now accept as almost inevitable that 30% of all species might disappear due to climate change over the next few decades. God forgive us.

God created a world so beloved, so precious, that God became one of us that we might all live. Let us celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord in song and prayer and in every part of our life. Let us seek resurrection in our relationships with those we love, with strangers, and with our relationship with this world. If we mean “thy will be done, thy kingdom come” then this means co creating with God a new earth – a place of peace, of justice and compassion for all, and of deep reverence of all living beings – whether they be our favourite household pet or an endangered species in the southwest forrest.

The resurrection began with Jesus but did not end with him. We are all called into a new way of being. And that's not just a disembodied spirituality about beliefs. It is about every part of life. Now we may have many interpretations about the specifics of that new way of living, just as we do about doctrinal matters, but we are called to live as new creations because of the resurrection of Christ.

Like Mary we need to look with eyes that critically see the physical, what's in front of us, and perceive matters of faith, what at first seems impossible but we come to know no only as possible but as equally real. This is one of the many gifts of Easter to us. Because of today we can see a risen Lord and the possibility of resurrection in our own lives, in the lives of those we love, and in the intractable failures of our world.

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