
Easter 2020

Acts 1:1-8 & John 1:1-17

We live in a world where a person's life can change for the worse in a matter of seconds. We can lose our jobs because of changes in the stock market. We can lose our health and die because of a virus. We can lose a family member because of an automobile accident. Yet, despite all these setbacks in life, humans want to live forever. Therefore, it is little wonder that the church is convinced that the greatest person who ever lived has risen from the dead. Today we celebrate that great miracle.

On this day, the Church celebrates the Resurrection of our Lord, a fest of all feasts. But the church also claims to celebrate Easter every Sunday as well! In that way then, anything you do so often can become matter of fact and taken for granted. It was very different on the first Easter. According to the New Testament, the people's reaction to the first Easter was surprise! No one in Palestine expected, of all things, a man rising from the dead. Whoever heard of such a thing? After Jesus' execution, the disciples were panic-stricken and scattered in all directions to hide. There was no room in their fear and depression for anything like hope. Even on that Sunday morning, the women who came to the tomb were only doing "the womanly thing" in that culture. They came with no expectations. Their conversation on the way to Jesus' tomb revolved around the question, "Who will roll the stone from the door for us?" ...for it was a very large stone.

Also, when the women ran to the disciples with the unbelievable report that Christ had risen, the disciples found it "unbelievable." Luke's Gospel says the women's story seemed to the apostles "an idle tale"... "and they didn't believe it."

And yet, that first Easter happened according to certain forgotten prophecies. However, for the people living there, it came as a great surprise. Lewis Cassels, a journalist, who converted from being an agnostic to a believer, wrote an apology for the Christian faith. He said, "What can be stated as abundantly documented historical fact is that there were witnesses---not two or three, or a dozen, but several hundred---who claimed to have seen and talked to Jesus after his death. These witnesses were simple farmers, fishermen and housekeepers. They knew that dead men usually stayed dead and they were fully surprised to encounter an exception to this universal rule of human experience."

Today, has anything changed from the idea of a dead man rising. For example, at one of the Universities a science professor, slightly left of center, was giving a lecture. It was right before Easter and spring break. A student asked the professor what he was doing over Easter. Well, you've heard of Christmas—Scrooge's bah humbug! He said almost the same thing. He said, the Easter story is only a myth. There is no God and there's no way a person rises from the dead!

A young female student who normally was quiet, replied, "Sir, I not only believe in God, I believe in the resurrection."

The professor replied, "You can believe whatever you wish. However, the real world excludes the possibility of miracles such as the resurrection. It is a scientific impossibility. No one who believes in miracles can respect science."

To prove his point the professor went to the refrigerator where he kept all the lab experiments and pulled out a raw egg. He stood on the desk and said, "I'm going to drop this egg on the floor. Science will prove that gravity will pull it to the floor and egg will break."

Now I give you a challenge in your so-called faith. I want you to say a prayer right now and ask the God you believe in, to keep this egg from breaking when it hits the floor. If God can break the rules of science, then you'll have proven your point. If not, I will have proven my point, what life and science is about!"

This shy girl stood up and prayed, "Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that when my professor drops the egg you will prove that you gave us science and make this egg break into a hundred pieces. Dear Lord, I also pray that when the egg does break, my professor will have a heart attack and die.

Everyone's jaws dropped! You could hear a pin drop. Nobody laughed. Nobody said anything. They just waited. For a moment the professor did nothing. He stared at the girl, then the egg, and without a word he carefully put the egg back into the refrigerator and said with disgust, "Class dismissed!"

That day, the students not only learned a great science lesson but a great lesson in life. The professor apparently believed in God's existence more than he thought, because he was not willing to bet his life that God didn't exist.

The Apostle Peter makes it plain that the primary evidence for the resurrection of Christ was the life he lived. How could a man who did good works and healed all who were in the grip of the devil be defeated by death? God vindicated that life by raising Jesus from the dead.

Sometimes familiarity can destroy the awe and wonder of it. We naturally and rightly desire to be realistic with what matter to us, as was the professor. But often that very intimacy can cause us to lose the enchantment and mystery that first drew us to them. This is especially true for us about Easter.

Those of us who live with Christ have defeated the power of death. Resurrection is not some event that awaits us at the end of life. Rather, resurrection fills our lives with victory here and now, while promising the gift of life eternal. So, let us remain in God's hands and have a divine security in Eternal Love.

Amen!