

A New Day in the Resurrection of Jesus

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Easter

Christ is risen from the dead
Trampling down death by death
And he rose from the tomb
To give us life.

The risen Lord gives us new life. The experiences in life help us to appreciate what the Lord did for us on that first Easter morning.

There is a story of “a college girl who was on a plane flying from Pittsburg to her home. As she stared out of the plane window down at the green countryside below, her heart was heavy and tears were in her eyes.

She was a student returning home for the Easter season. Her first year of college was nearly over and it was a disaster. She was convinced that life no longer held any real meaning for her. Her only ray of happiness lay in the fact that she would soon see the ocean, which she loved dearly.

As the plane touched down on the runway, the girl wondered what kind of Easter vacation was possible after having such a difficult time in college.

Her grandmother met her at the gate, and the two of them drove to her home in complete silence. As they pulled into the driveway the girl’s only thought was getting to the ocean

It was well after midnight when she arrived at the beach. What happened next is best described in her own words. She says, “I just sat there in the moonlight watching the waves roll up on the beach. Slowly my disastrous first year passed before my eyes, day by day, week by week, month by month. Then suddenly, the whole experience fell into place. It was over and past, i could forget about it forever. But at the same time, I didn’t want to forget it.

“The next thing I knew, the sun was rising in the East. As it did I sensed my feelings starting to peak, just as a wave starts to peak before it breaks. That morning I, too, arose!

“It was as though my mind, heart and body were drawing strength from the ocean. All my old goals, dreams, and enthusiasm came rushing back stronger than ever. I rose with the sun, got into my car, and headed for home.”

After her Easter vacation that girl returned to college, picked up the broken pieces of her year, and fit them back together again. In the short span of an Easter vacation, that girl died and rose again. For the first time in her life she understood the practical meaning of Easter. [The Sower’s Seed, Cavanaugh]

Friends, we can also look back on our lives and recall what was, or we can look forward and celebrate what the new day holds in store for us.

Easter is a blessed time for us to witness to a new day in life and faith especially in the resurrection of Jesus. The Lord gave us the gift of life when he was resurrected.

The death of Jesus came in worldly darkness. As he gave up his spirit to God, he forgave humanity. He gave his life for those who believe so that they might live for a new day. For Jesus the tomb engulfed his dead and limp body as he was laid within its grasp.

However, the grasp of the tomb and bondage of death could not hold him. He broke the bonds of death and was raised on the third day.

The memory of Jesus' life and death were in the hearts of the faithful as they hid from the rest of the community. Their hearts were heavy with pain, loss and sorrow. The Savior was dead.

Then came the third day when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb where the body of Jesus lay. The memories flowed through her of the past events as she went to the tomb. To her astonishment, she found the stone rolled back from the empty tomb. She went immediately to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple to report what she had seen. She said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb" and the whereabouts of his body was unknown.

Peter and the beloved disciple ran to where they, too, found an empty tomb. They found only linen wrappings where the body had lain. They went away from the empty tomb without understanding what Jesus had said to them about his rising from the dead on the third day. They forgot about the resurrected life of Jesus and what he had promised his followers.

Mary wept as she lingered outside the tomb. It was then that she found herself in the presence of two angels. They were wondering why she was weeping. Unbeknownst to her, she then found herself in the presence of the risen Lord who she thought was a gardener. She wanted to know where he had taken the Lord's body. When Jesus called Mary's name, she finally recognized him and her eyes and heart saw him through the pain and anguish of grief. She then wants to hold on to him and keep him close.

However, Jesus says to her, ¹⁷...**"Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"** When she returned to the disciples and in her own voice she proclaimed to them. "I have seen the Lord."

Yes, Mary had seen the risen Lord with her own eyes and heart on the first Easter morning. This was and is the confirmation of Jesus breaking the bonds of death to give new life.

My dear sisters and brothers, the risen Lord has given us a new understanding of death and life. The death of a loved one is an event of moving from this earthly life into a new and eternal life with the Savior. We entrust our loved one into God's care and tender love. Like wise, God gave his Son to the world so that people would believe him to be the Redeemer. Nevertheless, his death and resurrection enlightens us to see the marvelous power of God. The resurrection of Jesus is the way for him to lead his faithful disciples to eternal life. To lead you and me.

Jesus himself pointed to the resurrection and the offering of new life to Mary and Martha after their brother, Lazarus, died. He said ². **"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"**

[John 11:25 (nrsv)] For us today, we believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Indeed, he is risen.

This past week, we all witnessed the fire that destroyed the Cathedral of Notre Dame in paris. People witnessed the destruction around the world. Pain and anguish were seen on many a face along with tears. When it was all over, photos were taken of the burned out hull of the cathedral. The one photo that is seared into my memory is of the charred inside where a beam of sunlight was illuminating the area before an altar.

The powerful image of that bright cross, empty cross, made me think of the resurrection. There it stood among all the dark destruction and showed its presence to the world. Yes, the Cross was empty and there will be resurrection.

Well friends, we are the Easter people who believe and rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus. This is a new day to renew our faith in the Lord and Savior. So, let us rejoice in this new day.

There is an old hymn that was written in 1874 by Robert Lowry. Even though it was written so long ago, it has meaning for us today as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

Low in the grave He lay—
Jesus my Savior!
Waiting the coming day—
Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Death cannot keep his prey—
Jesus, my Savior!
He tore the bars away—
Jesus my Lord!

Friends, christ is risen! He is risen indeed!
Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!
Praise be to God.
Alleluia! Amen.



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John 20:1-18 (NRSV)

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, **“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”** Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, **“Mary!”** She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, **“Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”** ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Acts 10:34-43 (NIV)

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living

and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”