

Easter: Resurrection

Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 28:1-10

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In an article by an Anglican priest from Vancouver titled "Doing Easter Right - 50 days of Joy"[1] he suggests that the church has learned some of the rhythm of Lent - prayer, fasting, sacrifice... but in many ways we prepare for Easter for 40 days and then act as though Easter is over in one. That's a lot of pressure for 1 day to bear!

Scripture tells us that for 40 days after Easter, Jesus appeared many times hanging out with a wide range of people. He showed up on road trips, dinnertime, private parties, beaches, lakes, and workplaces. He then ascends into heaven and 10 days later his people receive the Holy Spirit (Pentecost).

Pentecost (from the Greek word meaning "fiftieth") is the completion of Easter, not a separate idea.

- Jesus' resurrection → victory over death
- Ascension → exaltation as Lord
- Pentecost → His life shared with believers through the Spirit

So the Church celebrates all of this as one continuous story. The church has wisely given us a calendar with 50 days of Easter, because we need time for the new reality of Christ's resurrection to sink in.

Which is why we might have some compassion for Mary Magdalene and her friend Mary. Time is not on their side. Matthew's account of Easter morning emphasizes just how fast everything happened... Suddenly there was a great earthquake...go quickly and tell his disciples... The women ran quickly... they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message...Suddenly Jesus met them...

Just moments ago the two Marys are mired in the sorrow and doubt Good Friday brings: Has violence won? Has hatred triumphed? Has God been proven weak and helpless? Does the way of Jesus ultimately end in despair?

They walk Sunday morning to his tomb, likely still numb with grief and heartache. The very next moment they are confronted by fantastic events beyond their comprehension. Easter is a radical and sudden departure from the expected and explainable routines of our days. For all our present day images of flower bulbs, bunnies, and butterflies, we cannot be misled and think resurrection comes as a simple equation, like some inevitable, unfolding, expected event.

Matthew makes sure he includes all the wild and wonderful details "a violent earthquake ... an angel ... appearance like lightning ... clothing white as snow... guards keeling over..." these are the images of that first Easter. They are details that impress upon them and us that something

happened that changed not only the hearts of the women but tore a hole in normal history. "Awesome cosmic forces are at work when God announces: "Jesus has been raised." (Ed Searcy)

Because the resurrection is not just a comforting idea but a rupture in the fabric of history—then it is not something we can safely admire from a distance. The same power that shook the earth and stunned the guards is not confined to a tomb outside Jerusalem; it presses into our lives even now, unsettling what we thought was fixed and calling into question what we assumed was final. Death does not get the last word. Sin does not get the last word. Despair does not get the last word. When God raises Jesus, God is not only vindicating one life but declaring a new reality for all creation. And that means the risen Christ meets us here—not to leave us unchanged, but to draw us into that new creation where fear gives way to hope, and where even the most ordinary corners of our lives begin to tremble with resurrection.

Matthew writes that the two women messengers of the resurrection are trembling. "So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy..." This huge new event has overtaken their lives ... fear and great joy because they can never go back to the old again. They live in awe of the immense power of God to bring life.

What will this mean to the power of Pilate who thought he'd stamped out the Jesus problem? What will this mean to the forces of jealousy and hatred that thought they had triumphed? What will the resurrection of Jesus mean to those who had begun to believe Jesus' surprising message that the meek will inherit the earth and those who mourn will be comforted?

In those first moments of joy they are struck by the awesome understanding that a risen Jesus disturbs and upsets assumptions about power, success, purpose and life. That's the kind of joy resurrection breeds - not simply a self centered indulgence in chocolate and jelly beans, but a satisfying delight, elation and wonder at the surprising, overwhelming, amazing good news that Jesus who was crucified, is now alive!

Do not be afraid, the angel comforted them.
Do not be afraid, Jesus speaks to them.
Do not be afraid, the Easter gospel proclaims to us.

Because if we're honest, we are well-trained in fear. We know how to rehearse worry. We know how to anticipate disappointment. We know how to brace ourselves for bad news before it comes. In many ways, we've spent far more than 40 days—maybe years—practicing life as though Good Friday has the final say.

And so resurrection joy can feel unfamiliar at first. Even unnatural. Not because it isn't true, but because it runs so deeply against the grain of what we've come to expect from the world. It's the kind of joy that is going to take us, some practice.

That's why the church, in its wisdom, doesn't just give us a single morning of alleluias and then send us on our way. We are given 50 days of Easter. Fifty days to notice signs of life where we

once only saw endings. Fifty days to let joy interrupt our assumptions, to let hope outlast our cynicism, to let the resurrection reshape our imagination. To let the news of resurrection call to us, “Don’t be afraid.

Joy, in this sense, is not a personality trait. It is a practice. It is something we return to, again and again, until slowly—almost imperceptibly—it begins to take root. Until the story of Jesus’ life becomes the story we trust more than the story of fear.

The article I referenced earlier included many ways to practice Easter joy. Simple invitations, not as a checklist to complete, but as ways of training our hearts. Small, daily acts that open us to the reality that Christ is alive, and that his life is still at work in us and in the world. Here are a few:

1. Dwell in the resurrection. Make a reminder - morning coffee, brushing teeth, to personally soak in the news: Jesus is alive and present with us. Or make resurrection art: pysanka, poem, music, drawing, journal, bread, quilt, flower arrangement, carving... Use the creativity you have been gifted with to express the joy of resurrection.
2. Ask God for joy. David prayed “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and make me willing to obey you.” (Psalm 51:12). Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good. God delights in growing his joy in us - it comes in his leading - get ready to follow! Let joy show! Smile - God has wired us to feel joy after a smile! Ask God to make his face shine upon you and through you. Ask God to grant you the joy of seeing people coming to know him. Jesus says “there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents ” (Luke 15:10). If you know that joy, pray for another to know it too.
3. Take a stand for life in the face of overwhelming odds. Dignity for those with disabilities? Stop the coal mining of the eastern Rockies? Write a letter or make a phone call about adequate public education and universal healthcare. Defend immigrants and refugees from bigotry. Don’t entertain despair or defeat in the face of deadly power.
4. Cultivate thanksgiving and praise. The news invites us into the old fears, our reading from Colossians invites us to think of things of heaven. Coined “double space thanksgiving”
 - a. What is something you are thankful for? What does it tell you about God?
“Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God” James 1:17.
 - b. Spend time telling God about how awesome He is. He is faithful, good, wise, our provider, merciful, just, and on and on you can go. Not because God needs an ego boost, but because the joy of the Lord is our strength.

The women are told to go tell the disciples - as they do they are filled with great joy. The disciples are told to go and meet Jesus in Galilee - they obey.

Tell the person beside you, how you will practice resurrection joy this season.

Easter joy is not simply a call to be happy, but to abide in the new awesome and immense and triumphant life of Jesus Christ. Let us use these 50 days to let it sink into our life and our life together. The God who appeared silent on Friday has had, is having, and will have the last word.

Hallelujah!