

## *If It's True, It's a Different World; Does That Scare You?*

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On Good Friday Mary and I were present at the crucifixion. We went to see “Schindler’s List.” If you have seen it, you understand. If you have not seen it, do. It gives even to people versed in the Bible a clearer, more awful view of our sinfulness.

But just seeing evil does not make our soul able to free itself; freedom from our sins has to come by a massive, painful effort of the Almighty One, the raising of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead. There is, has been, and will be a world piled with crucifixions, like the bodies piled in the ovens at Auschwitz. There has been, and needs to be, only one crucifixion of the Holy God, and only one resurrection.

Today, as we meet with these distraught people, three women, outside Jesus’ tomb, let’s think together about this mystery, the resurrection of the Savior, and see something about how this *makes* him “the Savior.”

It had been a stormy session around that Last Supper table Thursday night, the disciples wrangling over which one should be Jesus’ right-hand man. What an opening service for Holy Communion! Jesus, patient to the end, tried to save them from the disaster of wanting to control people, to run things. He washed the feet of people who thought that was just messy work for those who are used to being on their knees. He poured out his divinity as he gave them his lifeblood and broken body in the Supper, while their thoughts were on their power struggle. He didn’t say, “I love you.” He *did* love.

What he said was, “Love each other. I stay in control by giving you peace. With my peace, you are free, no matter what your brothers or your enemies, or cancer or disaster do to you. I will be back to serve the world and to save it, and *you will help me*. First, love one another.”

And so Sunday morning, these women, who were not in on that tumultuous supper, came to the unnamed garden near Calvary. The Sabbath over, they went shopping for burial spices and arrived, nervous, apprehensive, at the grave. What a shock: it’s open, a well-dressed young man is sitting there. He says, “Don’t be afraid,” and gives them Jesus’ forwarding address; and they are so afraid that they don’t even go where the young man said to go.

They’re paralyzed. Something has gone wrong—or has gone so right they can’t take it in. Mark leaves the story there, with the men too afraid to come, and the women leaving terrified. But one thing, they knew: somehow it was clear to them that the world was not the same anymore. It was a new world. They just didn’t know what to do with it yet. But they would find out.

In raising Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, God showed us the world according to God. In Jesus Christ the world is now a new world. It is a world where the meek *do* inherit the earth, even when they don’t have a deed to it registered in the courthouse. It is a world where the poor in spirit have the only riches, and among the poor the bread is blessed and broken and everyone has enough. It’s where everyone knows that *enough is a feast* (in the old world a feast is not enough!). In the new world of the

resurrection, those who mourn are more than comforted; they dance before the Lord with their dead—often while they are still grieving. It is a world where the peacemakers know themselves, and everyone else, as children of God, and the merciful know what mercy does: it turns our enemies into sisters and brothers and causes weapons to rust and corrode or be transformed into tools.

At the same time, in this new world we who serve the Lord know the anointing of our heads with healing oil, while our cup runs over the table set for us right in the middle of our enemies. Enemies, yes, for this resurrection world will be lived out for some time under the conditions of the old one, which is full of enmity to God.

You remember we started with a word about mass crucifixions; we also have them within the family circle, and they're going on right now. We of this planet in our lifetime have tortured and killed more of our fellow humans than had been killed since time began. And we have brought poverty, starvation, and sickness to even more men, women, and especially children. We've done it with the undreamed of horrors of our war-making inventions, and an economic system that concentrates the control of land, electric power, communications, and factories in the hands of a relatively few in powerful countries. This system has been paid for largely by millions of Third World people—and we have many of them in Atlanta.

Crucifixion side-by-side with the resurrection world.

We cannot witness to this death world if we stay inside the church building, but it witnesses to us by telling us to stay here. We *can* bring a few of its trampled on here into our house, to feed and clothe them, to nurse their wounds and heal them, and thus show the death world a certain amount of love; and we need to come here to nourish ourselves and find healing, but only for brief times. This is just our base of operations. "He is not here; he is Risen. He has gone..." often applies to the church as to the tomb.

For the new and different world of resurrection is found, as it was on Easter morning, in the cemetery. This is only natural, since we do live in the world of death. So we must go out to the cemetery of moneygrubbing and power-grabbing, of the death dances of adultery and avarice and addiction; the cemetery of dead hopes and dreams and lost loves of ordinary people; the cemetery of the worms of worry and the flies of fear; and of slumlords and druglords and warlords whose dead fingers pick people to pieces and push them down as the prey of poverty. They did well to shoot "Schindler's List" in black-and-white.

Now, are we as frightened over this as the friends of Jesus were because he wasn't where he was supposed to be that morning? Is Jesus where he is supposed to be for us? They would soon find out. They would meet him, touch, hear him speak. Just for a few days, a glimpse or two, but it was enough, and enough *is* a feast. It was a feast for a lifetime of life in him. For this was the new life in the *yes* and the *amen* of the resurrection.

The world *is* new. It's coming, but it's now. The *yes* means, yes, your sin is forgiven, and that is the *crucial* matter—it *cost* God the life of a Son on the *cross*, and yes, your death *is* swallowed up in victory, a victory over the whole planetary death of the old world. It has been done, and it is on the way.

Christ the Lord is risen today. Blessed be the dead who die in the Lord.