

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

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RISEN

attributing the glory to God

by Drew Downs

Christians have an interesting semantic challenge with our relationship to the divine. The Triune God is three persons and also one God, which is often a kind of mind-bending philosophical explanation for a physical-obsessed population. We don't always want to live with an unanswerable paradox: it is easier when we have a clear, delineated order of things. This gets even trickier when we have to remember the attribution for the miracles goes to God rather than Jesus.

The theologian doesn't struggle with this, of course, but this is why our language can be so boxy and weird. Jesus doesn't rise, but is raised. He isn't the agent of the miracle, but the recipient of it. A similar thing will happen in forty days when he is ascended by God into heaven. Followers of Jesus tend to give him all of the credit, even as Jesus tends to give it all to another persona, Father. Maybe this all seems a bit extra, but it is also humble and relational: our central themes.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Crucifixion and Resurrection

For centuries, the church has followed a pattern of observance that allows us to experience the highs and lows of the events that lead to Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection: a period of time and practice we call Holy Week. And this pattern allows us to live into the time ourselves, gathering on the evening on Thursday in anticipation, then again in the middle of the day on Friday, to solemnly acknowledge his death, only to experience the absence ourselves for the rest of that day and into Saturday night before we begin to name Jesus's return. This pattern is ancient and has been lived into by millions of faithful people for more than a millennia.

It is also a pattern that is hard to maintain in the modern world. I'm writing about Easter on Monday of Holy Week, setting it to go live on Wednesday, before our faithful celebrations, printing hard copies to be mailed out to be read on Monday or picked up in church on Sunday. When people encounter this not set.

The word many use for this moment is to say we are *distributed*, which is to name, not only our physical and technological dispersment, but our *chronological* separation. That some will be celebrating Easter before the memorial of the Crucifixion takes place! This isn't just the weird thing we see in churches who skip over the crucifixion, or treat the crucifixion like it is the center of Easter. I'm speaking to the disorienting character of modern life in light of our need to be mindful of time, too. Of presence. Of being with other people. And the Easter story is fully dependent on our embracing God's desire to transform the finality of death. Which means we must wrestle with our own expectations of death, life, and the possibility of all of us being born again.

With love,
Drew+

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FOR SUNDAY

Easter

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Collect

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 20:1-18

Early 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. So 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." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and 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. They 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." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman,

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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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus 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.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflection

Mary checks on the tomb herself. After the activity of the first day, of preparing his body for the tomb and perhaps the tomb for his body, and then a day of silence, absence, Mary returns to the place of her Lord's final rest. There is a natural warmth I imagine is here, of love and devotion. Of the one who understood Jesus best.

The tomb's emptiness is famously shocking, as is her attempt to bring this news to others. Those who, like Thomas a few days from now, need to see it for themselves rather than take her word for it. An idea we should hold onto for a couple of weeks.

The tomb is also *not* really empty, for there is someone there, nearby, a potential gardener she thinks, who reveals himself to be, in fact, the risen Jesus — a twist that we all see coming, but she doesn't.

The classic Easter joy, I suspect, may best be filtered through these lenses of confusion and half-belief. That come from grief and reversals, trials and victories, and in the end, compel us to overcome our assumed finalities. Like death. And that we find, in the waning hours of night, that the break of day brings with it new revelations; changes that defy expectations. And that we, in fact, have new reasons to rejoice.

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