

EASTER REFLECTION: LET THERE BE LIGHT!

We began our worship today with the traditional acclamation “Christ has Risen, He has risen indeed!” For many folk across the world today it will indeed be a glorious day of rejoicing in the miraculous, a day where we reflect not only on the event 2,000 years ago, but on the resurrections in our own life. The day we accepted Christ. The day a long-awaited prayer was answered. The day sickness was healed or sorrow wiped away.

For others, Easter will only serve as a reminder of the cross. You'll feel like you got left at Good Friday, weeping, while the rest of the world moves on to Easter Sunday. You wish you could celebrate, but you don't know how. You may even apologize to God for your sombreness. You're not alone, I assure you.

In the past few months I've watched several Good Fridays and Easters play out in the lives of those around me. Engagements and babies ushered in cries of rejoicing and praises to God. Yet, cancer, infidelity, and financial hardship occurred uncomfortably close to these joyful events.

Most of life is like this. Happiness, unmixed, is not easy to come by.

So how do we deal with this reality? How do we deal with Good Friday and Easter coexisting?

I think we start with recognizing that the first Easter, the real Easter, was not just one event in time that occurred long ago. Christ's resurrection spanned the ages and has eternal consequences. It applies to you and me today just as much as it did to Christ's followers on Easter morning. It also applies to the future. Our hope, no matter where we may be today, is in the transforming truth of Easter.

Let us remind ourselves again of that first Easter morning – Mary wasn't approaching the tomb singing or saying “Christ has risen, He has risen indeed!”

Easter begins with a journey at early dawn to anoint a crucified corpse. It continues for eternity with the whispered words of God's sovereign love: ‘Let there be light!’ Resurrection is sparked by God, kindled by Christ and illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

If we are honest, often it is how we approach Easter ourselves - We've seen rays of hope before and have learned not to hope. It's not that we want resurrection to be delayed, but it just doesn't look like we're there yet. Oh well, we'll persevere. We're used to it by now – living in the meantime, betwixt and between – or so we say. But when extraordinary times are worse than ordinary ones, when the ‘new normal’ is not so normal, when we long to return to a recent

past that itself was a place of longing, God knows, we could use a good resurrection.

If Jesus saw his shadow and returned to his tomb, at least we know where he is. And a sealed tomb is a cocoon of potentiality – though we only know that if we've already lived the story. If we, like Mary Magdalene and the other women, have ever been up on the first day of the week – when the dawn was still dark, off to anoint the bodies of our broken dreams – then maybe we know something about the surprise of resurrection.

Maybe we know that this is how Easter happens. God's word interrupts the silence. Day breaks from the darkness. Light emerges and remains, and we didn't see it coming.

The resurrection of Christ reactualises the first day of creation, when God spoke, 'Let there be light.' Easter is the inception of creation as much as the culmination of crucifixion. It's the beginning not the ending. Easter is the genesis of the Christian life: light appears in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Easter occurred on a Sunday, but since we celebrate the day of the Resurrection as a holy day, we lose some of its original context – **Easter happened on the first day of the week**. Easter, in other words, was a weekday, workday event. It's as if we're accompanying Mary Magdalene to the tomb on Monday morning. To grasp the impact of the resurrection story – how God transforms the chaos of the world into an everyday sanctuary of time – we should envision Easter Sunday as Monday morning. Sundays come easily; Mondays are a different state of mind. If Sunday is a holy day, Mondays are the blues.

A school shooting in the United States occurred on a Monday in 1979, perpetrated by a sixteen-year-old student. When asked why she committed such a horrible crime, her response was dark and dreich: she hated Mondays. The story inspired the song 'I don't like Mondays' by the Irish band the Boomtown Rats, which became a number one single in the UK.

Mondays are days of fatigue, rust, regret, anxiety and trepidation.

On Mondays, the immediacy of the weekend lingers. There's a rear-view quality to Mondays. Just ask Mary, whose mind that morn was on the crucifixion. Mondays, above all, catch us unprepared.

To arrive at the Resurrection, we should take a Monday approach to the tomb. As we venture into the world unprepared, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12), Easter is a weekday, everyday surprise.

Mary Magdalene saw the risen Christ through her tears. The Resurrection happened on a workday. God is a God of surprises. Easter sets light to the world, and darkness can never overcome it.

Easter is the word of life that God speaks into our hearts. In a world full of planetary darkness, Easter is the light of God in the world.

Christ himself is the light, a light which transcends the beginning of time.

At the same time, Easter returns us to the first day of creation, to an additional light that God spoke into being. According to Abraham Joshua Heschel, the light created on the first day, which was different from the sun, illuminated the world from end to end, but since we were unworthy of such light, God concealed it from our sight. For Heschel, something of that light appears on the sabbath, the seventh day, as 'spectral glimpses of eternity'. That, no doubt, is the case. But the light spoken into being

at the dawn of creation occurred on the first day, which, for Christians, is the day of resurrection.

Two lights, therefore, converge on Easter. The divine light of Christ and the expansive light of God's creation. Together, they cast no shadows but illuminate the world from one end to the other. Light begets light. Easter heralds eternity.

Resurrection is God's response to darkness and chaos, to death and destruction, to the worst of what can happen.

Christ is alive. His light is with us today. That is the good news of the resurrection. No matter what darkness we face, Christ's light is there. The darkness of our sin is overcome by the light of Christ's hope. The darkness of death is replaced by the light of everlasting love with the Father, through faith in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The darkness of this world is replaced by the world's true light.

On this Easter morning, all of us face some kind of darkness in our lives. It could be the darkness of family discord. It could be the darkness of personal struggles. It could be the darkness of grief, it could be the darkness of doubt. Whatever darkness we face, the truth of the resurrection is this: Christ's light has broken through the darkness that this world has over us and gives us an everlasting hope.

Mary, Peter, and John saw the light in their own ways that Easter morning. Peter and John looked in the tomb and saw that Jesus was not there and left knowing that something had happened. Mary saw it for herself. What about us? How will we experience the Light this Easter?

Resurrection occurs in our homes and on our way to work, in the brightness of Sunday dawn and in the darkness of Monday morn. Easter is the beginning not the ending. It's the genesis we didn't see coming. The first of many days to come.

Easter begins with a journey at early dawn to anoint a crucified corpse; it continues for eternity with the whispered words of God: 'Let there be light!'

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!
Christ is alive! Hallelujah! Amen.