

Alleluia! The Lord is Risen.
The Lord is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

After Jesus died, they wrapped his body in fine linen and placed it reverently in a small rock cave, the entrance to which was only waist-high. There was no time to embalm Jesus' body before Sabbath – Sabbath started at sundown – so they sealed the tomb with a rock hewn to fit the opening.

No cracks allowed light into the cave; and the rock itself had no fissures. The inside of the cave-tomb was black night.

Absolute darkness. The nature of that darkness was death, the ebony of despair. When they sealed the tomb, they sealed violence and degradation inside, along with: your grief, your failed relationships, your enmity and your strife.

The tomb literally became a black hole, sucking all of the world's darkness into it. So it appeared, light as well – the black hole even captured God's Son, the very light of the world.

Only – all was not as it appeared. The most extraordinary thing happened.

We don't know exactly when this extraordinary thing happened, what time of night it was. Just after midnight, or later 3am? 5:45? Perhaps it was while we were asleep? Certainly, all of Jerusalem was asleep, when light exploded. Inside the dark tomb.

The Light darkness had captured. Could it have been like radio vacuum tubes? You remember those? They were glass, and when ignited by electricity they started to glow. Latent atoms of oxygen and hydrogen and nitrogen burned filaments, softly at first, expanding, the glow becoming brighter and brighter.

Maybe resurrection light was of that nature. Or, perhaps, it was something else altogether:

Instantaneous light, the violent flash of an atom splitting, literally catapulting the hewn rock aside. Only without sound. Light without sound.

The entire countryside around Jerusalem lit-up. Our world, too, lit-up. Had we been awake, we would have noticed, but we were asleep. And even if our brains sub-consciously registered the light, while we were asleep, the light dissipated by the time we opened our eyes.

It was a dream, they imagined; It is a dream, we still imagine.

Only it is no dream, it is the most real event in all of human history.

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The most real event of human history, when darkness was decimated, death was defeated, and your life was affirmed.

Faith and not nihilism became your destiny. Hope and not despair. Salvation.

Most people think of “salvation” in terms of heaven or hell – as in, are you saved?

Some of you have heard me tell the story of a friend’s grandmother. When someone would ask her, Are you saved? She would answer curtly, “Why no, and how unattractive of you to remind me.”

When I use the word “salvation”, I don’t use it to mean plucked in the nick of time from a fiery hell. When I use the word salvation, I mean this: God infuses light and life into your world, today. You are given hope today. Meaning, today you have a relationship with the Very God of Very God, the Creator who made you, today you are renewed.

Easter. And today hope replaces despair, dreams supplant nightmares. I invite you to live into the risen Christ, to add purpose and meaning to your life today. To dispel your darkness, today.

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The English comedian and actor Ricky Gervais wrote an opinion piece published by The Wall Street Journal last week. In it, Gervais, who is an avowed atheist, railed against Christians.

Needless to say, I’m not particularly fond of the atheist position. Which is why ... I can’t resist telling you about the banner a British Church posted on the side of its building at Easter time.

Happy Easter to our Christian friends;

Happy Passover to our Jewish friends;

To our atheist friends,

Good Luck.

Actually, as they say, some of my best friends are atheists. I understand the improbability of the Christian Easter claim – I would prefer it, however, if atheists didn’t direct quite so much anger at us Christians ...

Which leads me back to Gervais.

He attributes this quote to Mahatma Gandhi: "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians." With that, Gervais declares himself to be a better Christian than most – well, Christians.

To prove his point, Gervais proceeds to show how he has kept every one of the Ten Commandments. I know ... Gervais is a humorist, and he is using satire.

But guess what: I sort-of agree with him.

Most of us Christians aren't very good at being Christian. Which frankly, is why I need the hope of the Empty Tomb. What Gervais misses, however, is what it means in the first place to be a Christian.

Being Christian does not mean you are necessarily good at the commandments. Rather, being Christian means you have moved from the Saturday side of the resurrection to the Sunday side.

From the death side of Jesus to the life side.

From the despair of the darkness to the hope of exploding light.

A Christian is a follower of the Resurrected Lord Jesus! Nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

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Which means: life has replaced death, peace has replaced war, and reconciliation has replaced enmity.

We are Easter People, and unabashedly so.

What you do matters but it matters because you are Easter people, not the other way around. You are not Easter people because you are good enough.

What you do does not make you a person of faith; being a person of faith allows you to do good. Allows you to help others who struggle, allows you to bring little pieces of light into this black tomb world.

Easter people help other people.

Which oddly, makes Gervais right. We can and must do better.

You because of the tomb are now exploding light. You are electricity igniting vacuum tubes of light.

And I wonder, whatever will you do with your light?

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