

EASTER: REJOICING IN RESURRECTION HOPE

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Easter Day

April 4, 2010

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43

Luke 24:1-12 or John 20:1-18

Radical Resurrection

To say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is radical amounts to an exercise in redundancy! Radical carries the connotations of extreme change or departure from the traditional or normal. In this sense, the resurrection of Jesus is precisely *radical*. Resurrection goes against the laws of nature, human logic and cultural normality. In other words, Jesus' resurrection has always been and can only be supernatural, illogical and counter-cultural! Since the whole of Christianity is based on this supernatural, illogical and counter-cultural event, then it should be clear that Christianity itself is supernatural, illogical and counter-cultural!

First, the resurrection is supernatural. According to the laws of nature, when something dies, it ceases to have life in this reality. The truth of this "law" is what makes death so insurmountably difficult. When someone we know and love dies, it hurts to the core of our being and words fail to capture the depth of our human experience. In the resurrection, this law of nature is overturned; therefore, the resurrection is not natural – it is supernatural. In the resurrection, the dead are told to live. That's exactly what the two men in "dazzling clothes" said to the crowd of women who came to the tomb after Jesus' crucifixion: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24:5, *NRSV*). He is risen, indeed!

Second, the resurrection is illogical. Antagonists of Christianity have said this from the beginning of the Christian movement, and they are correct. The resurrection of Jesus defies all human logic because human logic takes so many of its cues from laws of nature! The human capacity to understand fails before the resurrection. This is why it was so hard for the remaining disciples to believe the women when they reported Jesus' resurrection. Luke says, "But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11, *NRSV*). Yet, he is risen!

Third, the resurrection is counter-cultural. It was not the cultural norm for the dead to come back from the grave in first century Palestine – this continues to be the case in modernity. The resurrection challenges cultural normality. For those who believe in an afterlife, the resurrection is not an intangible, bodiless existence. Jesus' resurrection was

full and physical. He ate breakfast with believers (John 21:1-14) and broke bread with backpackers (Luke 24:13-35). He is risen!

What are the implications of the resurrection for Christians in modernity? I think it continues to call us to the supernatural, illogical, and counter-cultural. In other words, the resurrection is still radical. Regarding the cultural normality that permeates our Western society, Richard Foster says that “the slender people we value; the fat we don’t. The successful people we value; the failures we don’t. The powerful people we value; the helpless we don’t. The intelligent people we value; the ignorant we don’t. And on it goes, *ad nauseam*. But for the children of the kingdom it is not important *who* a person is, only that a person *is*.”¹ This is the radical notion of neighbor that Christ’s resurrection resurrects in us all. He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by the Rev. K. Jason Coker, an ordained minister with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and pastor of Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Connecticut. Visit www.wiltonbaptist.org to learn more about the ministries of Wilton Baptist Church.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Indonesia – With thanks to God for the publication of the first Indonesian Study Bible, the Minang and Mentawai Bibles, the Mori New Testament, and the *Source of Life* magazine, and with prayers for these projects, for Bible revision and radio and television projects, and for God’s blessing on the *Literacy and New Reader Program*; **South Pacific** – With thanks to God for the partnership with the *Sea Hawk* yacht ministry which enables outreach to people on remote islands, and for ongoing Bible work in 14 nations, and with prayers for work on translating Bible Comics into various languages in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, and on completing Bible translation projects for Kiribati, Fiji, the Cook Islands, and Samoa; **Papua New Guinea** – With thanks to God for the *Prison Literacy* project whereby long-term prisoners are being trained as literacy teachers and sharing their skills with other inmates and the local community and translating Bible booklets into local languages for use in schools; **Philippines** – With thanks to God for the success of the *May They Be One* campaign, through which one million Bibles will be distributed to poor Filipino families, and with prayers that 1,200 churches will be reached to encourage church members to own and read the Bible, that translation projects remain on schedule, and that Scripture engagement projects and Bible celebrations will inspire and influence Filipinos to make God’s Word their manual for life.

Activity Corner: “Fifty Days of Easter” Devotional

Supplies needed: Bible; white construction paper; cross pattern (approximately 1-1/2” x 3”); pens or pencils; scissors; hole puncher; string.

To mark the 50 days of Easter, cut out a cross a day and link them with string.
Read a verse a day from 1 Corinthians 15, where the apostle Paul describes Christ’s

¹ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), p. 248.

victory over the power of death and the new life we all share in Christ. Since there are 58 verses, combine the following: Day 1 - verses 1 & 2; Day 3 - verses 4 & 5; Day 4 - verses 6 & 7; Day 10 - verses 13 & 14; Day 21 - verses 25 & 26; Day 25 - verses 30 & 31; Day 48 - verses 54 & 55; Day 49 - verses 56 & 57. Select a key word from each day's reading, and write that word on the cross for the day. Incorporate that word into a closing prayer. Display the growing chain throughout the Easter season where you gather for family devotions. At the end of the 50 days of the Easter season, you will have a chain of crosses as a reminder of Christ's victory over sin and death and God's gift of eternal life.

"Hands On" Easter Lily Bouquet

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2" x 11" white construction paper; pipe cleaners; pencils; scissors; scotch tape.

Invite everyone to trace their hands on white construction paper (paper may be folded in half so that two hands can be made simultaneously). Cut out the hands and, using a pencil, curl the fingers. Roll the hands so that the curled fingers face outward, insert a pipe cleaner down the center of the lily, and tape the bottom of the flower. Place the lilies in a vase and use as an Easter centerpiece at meals or display them on a window ledge. Read together Song of Songs 2:11-12 and celebrate the beauty of spring!