

“Easter Destination: Glorious Resurrection”

Isaiah 25:8-9, Matthew 28:1-10, Colossians 3:1-4 and 1 John 3:1-2

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Scripture Readings

Isaiah 25:8-9

He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Colossians 3:1-4

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.”

1 John 3:1-2

“See what love God has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are...Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when Christ is revealed, we will be like Jesus, for we will see him as he is.”

“Easter Destination: Glorious Resurrection”

There’s a story told about Einstein traveling from Princeton on a train. The conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn’t find his ticket, so he reached in his pant pockets. It wasn’t there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn’t find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn’t find it. The conductor said, “Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I’m sure you bought a ticket. Don’t worry about it.” Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket. The conductor rushed back and said, “Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don’t worry; I know who you are. No problem. You don’t need a ticket. I’m sure you bought one.” Einstein looked at him and said, “Young man, I, too, know who I am. What I don’t know is where I’m going.”

The resurrection tells us where we are going.

On the first Easter morning Mary, the women, the disciples, all Jesus followers and friends did not know where they were going. Each of them was wrestling with the giant of death who was eating away all of their hope and joy. Joseph and Nicodemus struggled with death by trying to fix it. Joseph got Jesus’ body. Nicodemus brought expensive embalming ointment. Together they made the best of the situation. They made all the arrangements, followed all the customs, held a committal service and buried Jesus in a nice tomb. Peter and the disciples struggled with death seeking self-preservation. Peter denied Jesus to save his own life. The disciples attempt to flee from death, to run away from the pain. Mary and the women worked through their grief by keeping busy. They purchased spices, they gathered the anointing supplies, they got dressed in their best clothes. They left for the tomb when it was still dark. They had no idea why they were going for they would not be able to get past the guards. Even if they could get past the guards they would never be able to break the seal or roll away the massive stone. Each and every one of them was lost in a dark canyon of despair with no real hope of ever finding their way to abundant life. They had no idea where they were going.

The giant of a problem is not just that we die. The problem is the world is a mess. There is pain and suffering and we can’t fix this mess. Judas found the mess unbearable so he committed suicide. The theologian Karl Barth wrote, “We are deeply imprisoned in our world of sin and death. We are incapable of helping ourselves. Admit it, there is no way out of this life with its thousand festering needs. Nothing except the possibility of a miracle can help us.”

Easter overcomes all the mess, festering needs, pain, suffering and death. Jesus took all of it to the cross. Jesus’ sacrifice conquered death and all of its messy forms and buried all of it. Jesus was dead. He was crucified, pierced with a sword, embalmed and sealed in an air tight tomb for three days devoid of oxygen. Jesus was dead.

Clarence Hall declared, “Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won’t stay there.” Jesus knew where he was going. Jesus foretold his resurrection numerous times. Jesus gave foretastes of resurrection through his miracles as Jesus forgave sins, welcomed all into loving community, cured disease, made whole the broken, provided food, healed people of their physical, emotional and spiritual pain. Jesus silenced natural disasters. Jesus gave people confidence, power, peace, joy and love. Jesus brought back to life a dead girl and Lazarus. Jesus cleaned up the mess, satisfied needs and alleviated suffering.

The followers of Jesus wanted to believe that they, Jesus and the world were going to glorious resurrection; however they were afraid of the giant of death, overwhelmed by the dark canyon of despair. It wasn’t until they experienced Easter that they were confident that their destination was glorious resurrection. On that first Easter not only was the tomb empty, Jesus

appeared to them, talked to them, ate physical meals with them. Jesus was physically resurrected, you could touch Jesus, embrace Jesus. Easter is factual truth. Jesus was physically dead, three days later Jesus was physically alive. The Apostle Paul wrote and proclaimed 20 years after the resurrection that, “Jesus appeared to Peter and then to the twelve and then to more than 500 of the brothers most of whom are still living.” Now you don’t write something like that unless you know the eyewitness will confirm it. History books from that time collaborate the Bible. Jesus’ resurrection was no parable, metaphor, spiritual analogy or mystical experience. Jesus was physically resurrected.

Further proof is the radical change, the transformation, the resurrection in the lives of Jesus’ followers. Mary journeyed from despair to wonder, from depression to joy. The women journeyed from fear to amazement. Peter journeyed from coward to the rock upon which the community of faith is built. The disciples journeyed from betrayal to bold witnesses, from sleepy to praying, from power seekers to servants, from selfish to loving. Saul journeyed from a chief persecutor of Christians to Paul, a primary missionary. The resurrection revealed to all of them where they were going.

Because of Jesus’ resurrection all of us know where we are going and we know where the entire world is going. Our ultimate destination is glorious eternal life with Jesus. We are resurrection people. Phillips Brooks sings,

“Tomb, thou shalt not hold Jesus longer;
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right.”

Jesus is Lord over death and destruction. Jesus is alive! The light of Christ dispels all darkness. Jesus has risen! Despair is overcome with the joy of God. Jesus is risen indeed! Jesus has defeated all the powers of evil with love. Jesus is alive. Jesus is with us, enabling us to overcome every obstacle, empowering our resurrection. Jesus is risen! We have a great God who created all things and one day God will fix it all up. Jesus will heal and redeem all of creation. All will enjoy a God-perfected, God-redeemed, God-set-right life. God will establish righteous, full, vibrant, Technicolor, eternal life. Jesus is risen indeed! Easter enables us to celebrate because we know where we are going. This alone would be more than enough to celebrate on Easter yet there is more to Easter.

The angel at the tomb said **Matthew 28:5-7 "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. Jesus is not here; for Jesus has been raised, as Jesus said. Come, see the place where Jesus lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'Jesus has been raised from the dead, and indeed Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Jesus.'**

See the tomb where Jesus lay. The women realized it wasn’t just Jesus’ death in that tomb. Somehow it was their death, our death too. Somehow all our sin, guilt, regret, mistakes, pain, suffering was in that tomb. Somehow all the hate, desire for power, greed that crucified Jesus was in that tomb. Somehow all the mess, festering needs, brokenness of the entire cosmos was in that tomb. Everything wrong with life was in that tomb. The angel is saying to us today, to you, “see the tomb where Jesus lay” Don’t deny your frustrations, what’s wrong with your life, what’s wrong with the world, acknowledge it, see it defeated, buried, in the tomb. Stay for a moment but don’t linger in death. The angel says to us, “go quickly, Jesus has been raised from the dead, and indeed Jesus is going ahead of you; you will see Jesus.”

Karl Barth wrote: “The Easter message tells us that our enemies — sin, the curse of death — are beaten. Ultimately they can no longer start mischief. They still behave as though the game were not decided, the battle not fought; we must still reckon with them, but fundamentally we must cease

to fear them any more.” Robert Flatt says “The resurrection gives my life meaning and direction and the opportunity to start over no matter what my circumstances.”

As the women left the tomb with fear and great joy Jesus met them. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, go and tell others they will see me.” Jesus is the ticket that shows us how to journey from the fearful tomb to joyful resurrection. Carl Knudsen said, “The story of Easter is the story of God’s wonderful window of divine surprise.”

Resurrection declares that all of us are going to eternal life. Resurrection is also happening in you, in everyone and in all of the world today. The Apostle Paul wrote, **Colossians 3:1-4** “**Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.**”

The Apostle Paul is explaining how we can experience resurrection today and everyday. We have, past tense, died with Christ and we have been raised, past tense, to new life. Yet our real life remains hidden. We don’t fully understand who we are and where we are going. This hiddenness is obvious. Resurrection has merely just begun. Disease has not yet been eradicated. Loving community has not yet been established for all. Suffering has not yet ended. Resurrection in all its glory has not yet been fully experienced. Easter declares that it will be and is currently happening. Jesus’ resurrection is just the beginning. In essence the Apostle Paul is echoing the voice of the angel, leave the tomb, go see Jesus. Don’t linger at the tomb thinking about death rather think about the realities of heaven, think about God’s glory, the world’s glory, everyone’s glory and your glory that will be revealed. Glory is defied as resplendent beauty and magnificence; great splendor; absolute joy, love, gratification and contentment; heavenly bliss; radiant light; triumphant rejoicing. Jesus’ resurrection brings this glory into our lives and into the world yet it is by and large hidden, unrevealed.

The angel and the Apostle Paul suggest that if we want to experience resurrection today, if we want to discover who we really are and where we are going, we should not linger at the tomb rather we should look for the glory of resurrection happening in us and around us today and we should strive to envision the glory of our future resurrections and our ultimate resurrection to eternal life.

Martin Luther said, “Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.” Resurrection is all around us. Hidden, unrevealed in a bulb is a flower, in a seed an apple tree, in cocoons a butterfly, in the silence a song, in the darkness a dawn. Resurrection is in our fairy tales hidden under outward appearances inner glory is revealed until ultimately a beautiful happy ever after life is enjoyed. Resurrection is in our books and movies, hidden, unrevealed under evil is a hero who gloriously saves the day. The most popular TV shows today are reality shows that reveal hidden glory. American Idol, hidden in an undiscovered person is the glory of a great singer. The Biggest Loser, hidden under poor eating and lack of exercising is the glory of a healthy lifestyle and body. Dancing With The Stars, hidden awaiting the right training and partner is the glory of graceful dancing. Resurrection is hidden in us revealed when we give to the food shelf revealing the glory of satisfied hungers, to One Great Hour of Sharing revealing the glory of lives redeemed from poverty, to workcamp revealing the glory of repaired homes and renewed lives. Hidden in every departure and goodbye is the unrevealed glory of reunion. Resurrection is in our work, service, love in our unique gifts and abilities. Hidden in spiritual practices is the unrevealed glory of soul renewal, your extreme makeover. Hidden, unrevealed, under the tarnish of our sin, pain and suffering is the glory of our unique, loving, spectacular true self. Hidden, unrevealed in the water of baptism is a cleansed and perfected life. Hidden, unrevealed in the bread and juice of communion is the eternal feast of heaven.

Most of the glory is still unrevealed. John declares, **1 John 3:1-2** “**See what love God has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are...Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when Christ is revealed, we will be like Jesus, for we will see him as he is.**”

The glory of where we are going, who we are, is by and large hidden and unrevealed awaiting resurrection. Jesus is our ticket to our ultimate destination, glorious resurrection. Easter is the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection, resurrections today, future resurrections and ultimately the glory of your resurrection. Look in the tomb and you will see that the world and all of us are imperfect. Don’t linger there, go, see Jesus, see God’s forgiveness, healing, perfecting grace, eternal love, abundant joy, see God’s power to renew life, see resurrection, see eternal life and try to imagine our destination glorious resurrection. Amen