

Matter cannot be created or destroyed

Easter Sermon 17 April 2022

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A minister was telling a group of children the Easter story when she heard one girl whisper to another, “I’m afraid for Jesus” – and the other girl whispers back, “don’t worry, I’ve heard this story before...He come’s back!”

Explaining Easter is no easy thing! I feel like I’ve spent a lifetime explaining to non-Christians why this story is so important in a modern context. Why it has relevance to all our lives.

Some get it. Humans are capable of terrible things and yet, there is something, someone (whom we call God) that makes us reconsider. Something/someone who knows wrong from right...and it all part of a bigger story of redemption. The story tells us how humans have a choice and what an amazing gift that is – and how bad things happen when good people do nothing. It tells us how political expedience is cruel and only defers the ‘problem’ (or the oppressed) until later when it comes back and bite its masters on the bum. The Easter story needs to be repeated to remind us, all of us, secular and religious peoples, that the context of this story is as real in modern politics as it was then and that God’s offer and presence has not changed.

For others, I’ve talked about how hope rises from the ashes – how we die 1000 little deaths and have 1000 little saving moments. Every moment a surprising gift and each of which restores us.

For Jewish friends, the importance of repeating the Passover story each year as their creation story makes it easier for them to understand why the Easter story is our foundation – it makes us who we are. As God saved the Jewish people in the desert, so God saved us on the cross. The dawning of their understanding as a people is *in* the Exodus stories – the dawning of our understanding is in the Easter story.

For those who sit Easter Saturday vigil, this is no surprise. Saturday is the day where all grief and hope are poured into the dark space. The liminal place where all is lost and nothing found. Easter Saturday vigil is a series of long pauses for silence and contemplation interspersed with around 12 readings and anywhere up to 11 psalms culminating in Lk 24:1-12 where the women find the tomb empty. The readings almost always start in Genesis and end with

only 2 New Testament references: The empty tomb preceded by Paul's letter (Rom 6:3-11)-where Paul says

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹

We start with God creating the earth and we don't end with resurrection but with potential.

It is a beginning. It is the beginning of a new story, of a new people of a new life lived with Christ that has no anchor in time or space. It is not a historical phenomenon or a passing phase. It is a living system that has no physical home except within our bodies and yet is not a parasite or organism we can identify – yet science has identified the 'God spot' in the brain. The place held for belief.

And it is a beginning of a beginning of a beginning – a never-ending story.

If you plant a seed and grow a tree. And the tree dies and you burn it, it gives off warmth, creates community. Communities plant songs and stories that reach out to other peoples. You could say, the invisible fruit of the tree.

Meanwhile, the tree becomes ash, which is a fertiliser, a binder for bricks and seeps into soil where it is absorbed in trees and grazing animals which are eaten by others and so the tree/story lives and lives again.

God knew this. Scientists took a little longer. Matter created – is not destroyed.

What could have been a tragedy – curled like smoke into something else...

Jesus' resurrection may be seen from many perspectives, through many witnesses – but all would agree, he rose up in a movement, in the hearts of millions – he showed death is not an end but a beginning.

He walks with us – as he did on the road to Emmaus – in our hands in feet, in our community work and financial support.

Jesus lives!!