

“The Lamb Wins!”

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21 April 2019 + Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church

Luke 24:1-12 = He is risen!

The Communist regime was ending in Czechoslovakia. A Methodist Church in Prague wanted to post a billboard to celebrate their newfound religious freedom and to bear witness to the faith they had held through suppression and persecution. After much prayerful thought and deliberation, they settled on a single phrase, just three words: “The Lamb Wins!”



With these three words, they captured not only the essential tenant of the Christian faith, the premier claim, the beginning, middle and end of what we believe, but they also captured perfectly the zeitgeist. “The Lamb Wins!” says it all, summarizes it perfectly ~ fundamentally witnessing to the

resurrection. Resurrection happens.

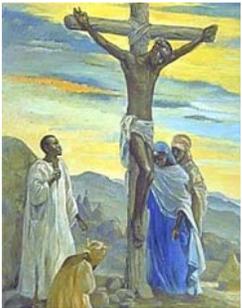
After the upper room, after retiring to Gethsemane, after Jesus’ capture, trial and crucifixion, the disciples had gone into hiding fearing for their lives. Only the women among the disciples had enough courage to emerge from hiding and complete the preparations of Jesus’ body for burial.



These roles at death the women took are not unknown even today. In every congregation there are faithful women with a casserole ready to deliver to the grieving family’s home, and faithful women who get busy making finger food and setting up for the reception.¹ Even in devastating grief, the women who followed Jesus were the only ones who overcame their real fear and trembling, and came after the Sabbath rest to complete the burial rituals.

All the followers of Jesus, male and female, old and young, had wept until tears failed, had wailed until there was no spirit left. All were devastated, lost and beyond grief. All felt Jesus had failed ~ that they had all failed in their mission.

In the Sixties, long before *Jesus Christ Superstar* and even before *Godspell*, there had been a musical about Jesus called *For Heaven's Sake*.² In a scene from that musical, three businessmen at happy hour sing a song entitled "Some Career" about Jesus. The song's first verse goes:

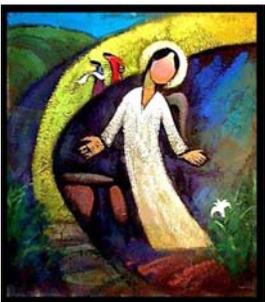


He was a flop at thirty three!
His whole career was one of failure and of loss;
But the thing that's so distressful
Is He could have been successful,
But instead of climbing "up," He climbed a cross!³

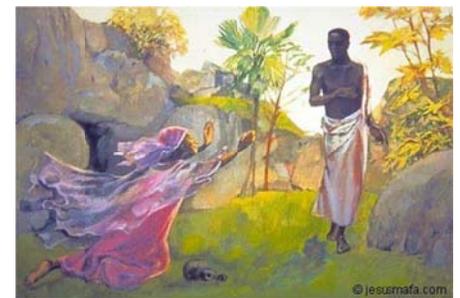
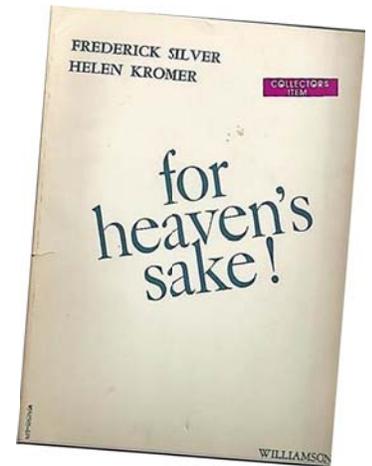
The song goes on to show how "He never got promoted on the job," never even had a credit card, and how he gave up carpentry for "preaching to the mob." Jesus is the biggest loser of all time. After a whole litany of other failures, the three businessmen ask in the last line:

So the thing that puzzles me,
Of why that flop at thirty three
Is called the most successful man to live on earth!⁴

On Easter morning, the paradox is that this flop at thirty three is transformed into the greatest winner of all times! "Christ is risen!" Resurrection happens! The Lamb wins! When the Lamb wins, we win also: we who have chosen the Lamb, win with him.



But even more, when the Cosmic Christ wins, everyone, everywhere wins. Big time. The transformational power of the resurrection is not limited to just those who follow Jesus. God's sovereign power to transform the whole world through resurrection is released, is available to everyone everywhere. All participate in God's great Good News.



Britain's leader through the darkest years of WWII, Winston Churchill had planned his funeral down to the smallest detail, choosing every hymn, lesson and participant. He wanted it to be much less a celebration of his life and much more a witness to the Resurrection of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Just so in 1965 there was a poignant moment in St. Paul's Cathedral at the very end. There was a brief silence and then far to the side from the Whispering Gallery, a single bugler sounded Taps, slowly, mournfully, signifying the day is done, that life is over.



The gathered worshippers were suddenly become the dispersed disciples after the crucifixion, experiencing the anguish, the agony, the panic, the grief of loss. Then, after a painfully long interval, from the other end of the great dome, a chorus of buglers then played Reveille, the dramatic announcement that a new day had just begun. The congregation was suddenly thrust out of grief and united in extravagant joy.

Churchill thus testified to the Resurrection, a new day, a new chapter of life is beginning.

“God has given us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ.”⁵

Resurrection happens. The Lamb wins.



in essence peripheral.

As Frederick Buechner has said:

“The worst isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to last. The last thing is the best.”

This cannot be overemphasized. *“Christ is risen”* is more than merely foundational, it is beyond foundational ~ the footing holding up the foundation ~ the very core of our faith ~ the central, essential belief on which all others hang. Everything else we believe derives from this. Everything else is



It's the power from on high ... that wells up from the rock-bottom worst of the world like a hidden spring... The last, best thing is the laughing deep in the hearts of the saints, sometimes our hearts even. Yes. You are terribly loved and forgiven. Yes. You are healed. All is well."⁶

God always has the last word. And the first word as well. The first word was "Let there be light." And the last word is "The tomb is empty ~ Jesus is alive." And the last word and the first word and the middle word is and always has been and always will be ~ Good News!



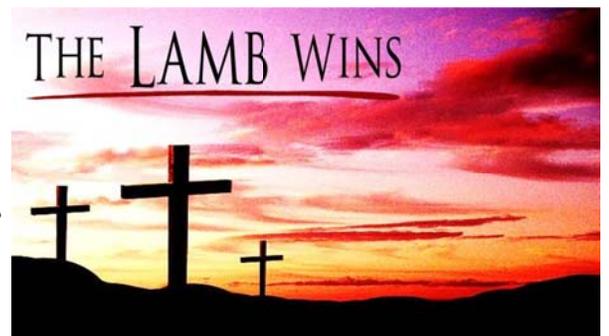
Resurrection happens. Notice that resurrection did happen in the past; that it is happening in the present; and by God's sure promise it will happen in the future. Resurrection isn't just a once and for all event only for Jesus to experience, and then for us sometime in the distance future maybe after we are already buried and gone. Rather, resurrection is happening right now.



The power for transformation of life and death demonstrated in resurrection is available to us right now and forever. It is available for individuals, yes, but also just as much for families, communities, states and nations. If we don't like the way our lives are going, resurrection can change all that, does change all that. It is the power of Jesus' resurrection for transforming lives and transforming communities, real change. Life in God's kingdom is living resurrection in our lives and in our communities right now.

When the Lamb wins, everybody wins.

Remember that decades-long conflict we euphemistically call the Cold War. That same conflict where the Methodist Church in Prague introduced the sign: "The Lamb Wins!" the same Cold War in which Winston Churchill early on introduced the term "Iron Curtain."



"The Lamb Wins!" is an apt expression for the fall of the Iron Curtain. St. Nicholas church in Leipzig, East Germany, as the Eastern Bloc was giving early signs of decline, the congregation began prayer meetings every Monday.



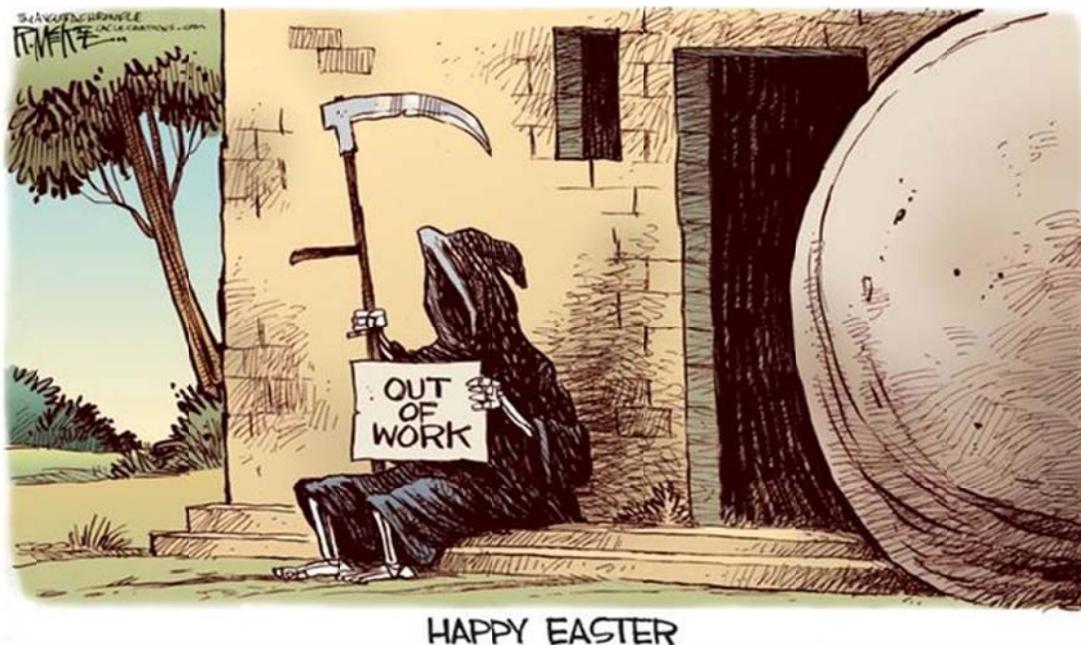
The pastor hoped the prayer meetings were to form a revival of faith.

First a handful showed up. Then a few more from the dedicated Christian underground. Then a few curious non-believers. Then a few more, and a few more. Eventually 200,000 were gathering every Monday in various venues for prayer and study.

Then one Monday, the 200,000 marched out after services, headed straight to the Berlin Wall and began tearing it down.



The Lamb wins! Resurrection power! Transformation is more than possible, it is inevitable. The Lamb wins! Jesus is alive! Resurrection happens! The Lamb wins, indeed!



¹ Jill Duffield, *Presbyterian Outlook* = <https://pres-outlook.org/2019/04/resurrection-of-the-lord-easter-sunday-april-21-2019/>

² Helen Kromer and Fred Silver, *For Heaven's Sake: a musical review in two acts*

³ Richard L Dayringer and Richard P Olson, *Ask Anything: A Pastoral Theology of Inquiry*, p. 29

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 30

⁵ I Corinthians 15:57

⁶ Frederick Buechner, *The Final Beast*, p. 175