

# E-ffervescence

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## Easter Sunday — Diss' Away



There seems to be a new Easter tradition jostling for air space along with controversy over shop opening hours, fluffy bunnies and chocolate eggs... and it's called, for want of another title 'Lets 'diss' the Christian message of Easter'.

Every year, with astounding regularity, we are told via the media that Christian Churches are ailing and failing, that no-one wants to hear the 'real' message of Easter...and that some expert or another has just begun to make megabucks with a new book proving

that Jesus didn't happen anyway.

There's no doubt about it- Christianity certainly doesn't have the privileged place in our culture it once had. But that's not new for Christianity. It certainly didn't have a privileged position in contemporary culture during the first couple of hundred years of Christianity. Christians were on the edge of society; treated with suspicion at best and persecution at worst; accused of (among other things) practicing cannibalism.

Yet, despite such a precarious beginning, it grew, and even though members of the church have blotted its copybook numerous times, and the media predicts doom and gloom, it continues to attract people worldwide. Why? Because if one is prepared to search beyond the superficial fluff, Christianity meets the deepest needs of all.

Somebody once said that life is a sexually transmitted disease. That's pretty cynical, but life's no laugh for many. There are a lot of people who have found Christianity is real because it faces that, and not many of the alternatives do. Christianity doesn't feed on

the self-obsession and narcissism that fuels a number of the 'spiritualities' readily available today, and that's a major reason why it doesn't fit easily with the culture we are part of- thank God it doesn't.

On Good Friday, while most of our culture was contemplating a few days of R and R, we met as a church to mourn the death of a man called Jesus who was executed 2000-odd years ago. On Easter Sunday, we met to celebrate that he is alive. Whole libraries have been written to say how, but I don't know if all those hows and whys can ever really totally explain it or prove it rationally. Maybe more importantly, the place where it makes most sense is in the heart.

Somehow, God came to Earth as one of us, a human being who was called Jesus, who showed us, through his words and actions, all we can concretely know of God. He ended his earthly life hung from a cross. Somehow, that life and that ending of life makes you and I worth something.

And, of course, what Christians celebrate at Easter is not only the ending of his earthly life but the celebration of his resurrection. Death is not a dark infinite universe of nothing into which we fall for ever... and of course, real life with God can begin a long time before we die.

So for me, all the 'dissing' in the world will not detract from Easter representing for myself and countless others the truest, most enduring and life-transforming thing ever!

God loves us- and Christ is risen!

*Arohauū  
Jacqui*



# Spirituality

## Again and Again... Easter

### Commentary Mark 16: 1-8

By Rev. T. Denise Anderson



Do we ever consider the mechanics of a sunrise? The earth spinning at 1000 mph, traveling an orbit of 584 million miles around a star that's about 1 million times the size of our planet is dizzying. But because we've come to expect sunrises every day, we're not always impressed by them. Often we sleep right through them. That doesn't make them any less awesome or miraculous. Easter is as familiar to Christians as a sunrise. We know the

story—at least one variation—and we likely expect to greet the day the same way every year. But if we've been sitting in the tension of last week, we may be able to experience this day differently. Mark's gospel is, again, straightforward. There are no frills in this resurrection account. There's not much joy in it, either. Sunday morning was a time of profound grief for those closest to Jesus. Consider those first few days after you've lost someone and the liminality between their death and funeral. There's no closure yet, and mornings are reminders that the nightmare is real. It's hard to imagine how you'll face the day. Friday's terror gives way to new terror as the women arrive to find the stone removed and a strange young man with an outlandish story. Remember that nothing about this sight is recognizable to them. This isn't comforting. They run away terrified, unable to even speak of what they saw! But resurrection still came, even if they weren't yet able to receive it. Things can be scary and okay at the same time. Again and again, the sun rises on a new day, often without embrace or acknowledgment. The same is true of resurrection. Whether or not we discern what's happening, God is literally and figuratively turning the world around. In her artist statement for "The Promise," Rev.

Lisle Gwynn Garrity writes: "Just after sunrise, they come to the tomb. They come to do what far too many cannot do in the wake of COVID's rage—to touch and anoint the body of their loved one, to provide a proper burial, to honor the life lost with a memorial."<sup>15</sup> How has the pandemic shifted (and limited) the ways we honor the dead? What new funeral rituals or memorial practices have emerged in this time? How have families found—or lacked—closure in the wake of losing their loved ones? Scholars believe Mark 16:9-19 was a later addition. In telling the good news of Jesus, why would Mark end with verse 8? What does this ending say about Mark's Christology—and, perhaps, his intended audience? What does this ending say about Mark's understanding of the resurrection? Where do you see glimpses of renewal—places of resurrection that are both the "already and the not yet"? What feels held within the promise of resurrection? "

## Guiding Q's

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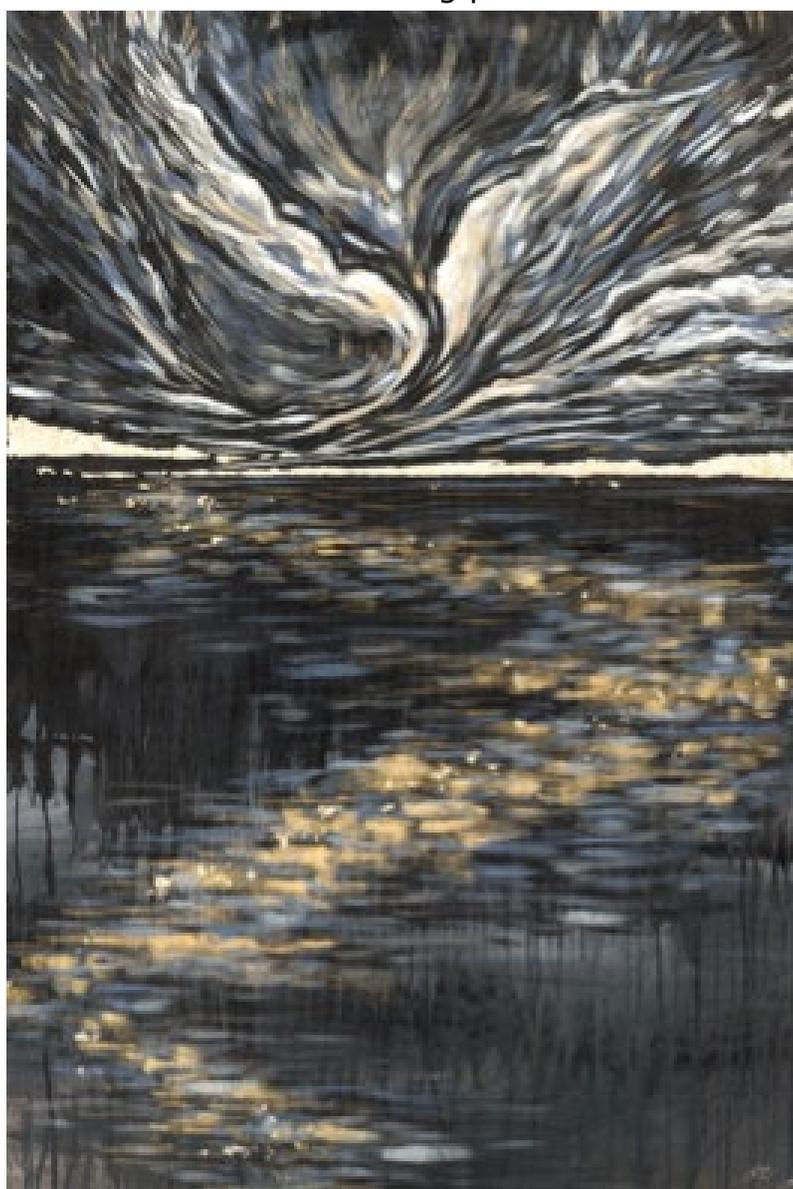
- What does this ending say about Mark's Christology—and, perhaps, his intended audience?
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- Where do you see glimpses of renewal—places of resurrection that are both the "already and the not yet"?

What feels held within the promise of resurrection?

## Art: Easter Sunday The Promise

Jesus lies down on the donkey's back, steeling himself before his journey through the palms. He has a target on his back—he's a disruption to the status quo upheld by the Pharisees and Chief Priests, and a threat to the power of the empire. His friend Lazarus is caught up in it all too. I imagine as he closes his eyes and strokes the donkey's hair, he hears the anguish in Mary and Martha's voices as they cried out to him, wondering why he took so long. I imagine he smells the pungent fragrance of the burial perfume poured on his feet, bringing into clarity the reality of his impending death. I imagine he sees the judgment on Judas' face as he was scrutinised for wasting perfume and neglecting those in desperate need.

Jesus plans to enter the city in a way that symbolically subverts power, taking a route opposite of the military leaders who oversee the festival celebrations. His entry would make a definitive statement, imaging an alternative kind of power, a servant leader riding an humble donkey. He knew this act would inch him closer to state-sanctioned torture and death. We are in a time when we need to draw on courage to call into question the structures that uphold systems of oppression. We are in a time when we need to subvert the powerful and protect the vulnerable. The crowds close in on Jesus. Some lift their hands in praise, others point accusingly. I hope this image serves as a reminder to call upon God for the courage you need, to rest and recharge for the work ahead. But I hope it also heartens you to move forward in courage, even in the midst of great resistance, toward the work God is calling you into.



**The Promise**  
by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity  
Inspired by Mark 16:1-8  
Acrylic & gold leaf on canvas

# Easter Sunday Meditation

In Italian, the phrase, "to give birth"  
Literally means, "to bring into the light."  
A mother will labour for hours and days,  
    Breaking herself for you,  
Whispering between fractured breaths,  
    "This is my body, broken for you."  
A mother will do this as long as it takes  
    So that you, her beloved,  
    Have a chance at life.  
    So that you, her beloved,  
Can feel the warmth of the light.  
    And after all that pain,  
    The sun will rise.  
The doctor will put a baby on her chest.  
The mother will hold her child as if  
Letting go is indeed physically impossible.  
    She will breathe easy,  
And then she will whisper softly,  
    "All this time,  
    All these deep breaths...  
It was love, again and again and again."  
    It is childbirth,  
But it is also resurrection.  
    A body broken.  
    Breath fractured.  
    A long night.  
    A sunrise.  
    Breath returned.  
    New life,  
And a love that won't let go.  
Friends, maybe Easter is just God whispering,  
    "All this time,  
    All these deep breaths...  
It's been love, again and again and again."  
I think we've been standing in the light all this time.  
    Now that I think of it, isn't it warm?

# Sunday's Readings

## Isaiah 25:1-10

O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain. The Moabites shall be trodden down in their place as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.

## Psalm 118

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Let those who fear the Lord say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.

With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?

The Lord is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortals.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

All nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

They surrounded me like bees; they blazed like a fire of thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me.

The Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;

the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

The Lord has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

## **1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

## **Mark 16:1-8**

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

# Weekly Readings List

## **SUNDAY APRIL 4**

**EASTER DAY/Te Rā o te Aranga/Tucake Tale  
(Fijian)**

Acts 10:34-43 Ps 118:1-2,14-24  
1 Cor 15:1-11 John 20:1-18

Morning Prayer: Ps 114,117  
Gen 1:1-5,26-31 2 Cor 5:14-6:2

Evening Prayer: Ps 105 **or** 66:1-11  
Ezek 37:1-14 Luke 24:13-35

## **MONDAY APRIL 5**

**Monday in Easter Week**

Acts 2:14,22-32 Ps 16:1-3,8-end  
Matt 28:8-15

Morning Prayer: Ps 111,(117,146)  
Song of Sol 1:9-2:7  
Mark 16:1-8

Evening Prayer:  
Ps 135 Exod 12:1-14  
1 Cor 15:1-11

## **TUESDAY APRIL 6**

**Tuesday in Easter Week**

Acts 2:36-41 Ps 33:4-5,17-end  
John 20:11-18

Morning prayer:  
Ps 112,(147:1-12)  
Song of Sol 2:8-end  
Luke 24:1-12

Evening prayer: Ps 136  
Exod 12:14-36 1 Cor 15:12-19

## **WEDNESDAY APRIL 7**

**Wednesday in Easter Week**

Acts 3:1-10 Ps 105:1-9  
Luke 24:13-35

Morning prayer: Ps 113,  
(147:13-20) Song of Sol 3  
Matt 28:16-end

Evening prayer: Ps 105  
Exod 12:37-end 1 Cor 15:20-28

## **THURSDAY APRIL 8**

**Thursday in Easter Week**

Acts 3:11-end Ps 8  
Luke 24:35-48

Morning Prayer: Ps 114,(148)  
Song of Sol 5:2-6:3  
Luke 7:11-17

Evening Prayer: Ps 106  
Exod 13:1-16 1 Cor 15:29-34

## **FRIDAY APRIL 9**

**Friday in Easter Week**

Acts 4:1-12 Ps 118:1-4,22-26  
John 21:1-14

Morning Prayer: Ps 115,(149)  
Song of Sol 7:10-8:4  
Luke 8:41-end

Evening Prayer Ps 107  
Exod 13:17-14:14  
1 Cor 15:35-50

## **SATURDAY APRIL 10**

**Saturday in Easter Week**

Acts 4:13-21 Ps 118:1-4,14-21  
Mark 16:9-15

Morning Prayer: Ps 116,(150)  
Song of Sol 8:5-7  
John 11:17-44

Evening Prayer: Ps 145  
Exod 14:15-end 1 Cor 15:51-end