

32963 Article ~ 3-10-10 – For “Post-Easter”

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How the World Works

Those of us who celebrate the festivals of the Christian year have by now happily donned our Easter best and offered our praise and thanks for the day. We’ve sung our “Alleluias,” pondered the empty tomb, sampled enough chocolate eggs to last us for another year, put the Easter bonnets and baskets back in storage, and perhaps feel we’re ready to move on. Easter is past.

Our busy calendars and our tendency to live life in discrete chunks of hours and minutes lead us to think of Easter as a single, distinct moment in time. It is to us a day, or perhaps at best, a brief season. It comes and it goes. But what if we have that all wrong? What if Easter is somehow supposed to be seen as eternal by us, like the life and spirit of the one we Christians claim set this holiday in our calendars in the first place? Would we live differently if Easter were more than a day to us?

We thought about this recently as the Holy Week preceding Easter Day proceeded. As is customary, our church reviewed and even re-enacted in our traditional worship services the last days of trials for Jesus. We recalled his triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the Passover, followed by the betrayal and desertion of his closest friends. We contemplated the sadness of painful death on the cross and the desperate confusion and anguish of the disciples. We do this each year because reviewing these events is helpful in reminding us of how significant Easter is. Its claims of renewed life make little sense without understanding the context of tragic death. In the shadow of the tragedy that precedes Easter, we leave church in total darkness on Thursday night.

But one year we were surprised by one of our young friends who came to us with a very good question. (Sometimes, we’ve learned, the minds and hearts of children are better at grasping the gist of things than we are.) Here is what she wanted to know: “Why do we leave church in darkness just because Jesus died? He can’t ever be in the dark, because God loves him. So we shouldn’t be in the dark either, should we? That’s not how the world works!”

We found the question haunting. Indeed, can we ever really be in the dark again, once we’ve seen the dawn of Easter? Even in the deepest place of desperation, the light filters through. In fact, maybe the light of God’s powerful, life-giving love find its way most successfully and noticeably into our lives just when we fear that darkness might fall.

Once the certainty that God’s light of love can never be extinguished really strikes you, then Easter is more than a day. It’s a constant, undeniable, unchanging reality of how the world works.