

EASTER SUNDAY, March 31, 2024 “Jesus’ Easter Miracle”

Acts 10:34-43 | Corinthians 15;1-11 John 20;1-18

DO you believe in miracles? To answer this question we must define what a miracle is “a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency. For those on the convinced side of this question they and you have experienced something that is amazing and causes you to wonder about life and its meaning in new ways. Some people though, don't understand what witnessing a miracle entails and some don't believe in miracles at all. And then there are others who say, “I don't believe in miracles, I rely on them!”

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! According to John's gospel, when Mary Magdalene first went to the tomb the stone had been rolled away. Mary went back and told Simon Peter and John and told them that Jesus' body was not there. Peter and John run to the tomb. They arrived looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there but he did not go in. They went in and when they saw they believed. What did 'they believe'? They did not fully understand what the scripture has stated about Jesus needing to rise from the dead. But they returned to their home wondering. The tomb was empty. Were they skeptical, confused lost in logical explanation? Just what might have they been thinking? Did they think it to be a miracle?

In the meantime, Mary was crying as she stood near the tomb. What had happened to the body of Jesus? She looked in the tomb and saw two angels in white who asked her why she was crying. She told them. Then she turned around and saw a man she thought was the gardener. HE asked, why are weeping? She asked the man if he knew where Jesus' body had been taken. But then when he spoke again, calling her by name. She knew the voice, the person, the master and teacher—Jesus called her Mary. Was this a miracle standing before her in Jesus?

According to Luke's story, Mary was not alone. Mary Magdalene was with Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women. They had prepared oils and spices to anoint Jesus' body. The stone had been rolled away. Inside they saw two men in dazzling clothes. They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They were asked why they looked for the living among the dead. He is not here. He has risen. They remembered his words and told the disciples. But Peter got up and went to the tomb, looked in and saw the linen cloths there. He was amazed at what had happened.

Two versions with the ultimate same ending. Jesus was alive. Was it a miracle? Was this really Jesus' Easter miracle for all of us tell and share?

By definition those who saw Jesus die, be buried and now did not see his body were wondering perplexed confused but a miracle? How could this be? IT was certainly a surprising and welcome event- that Jesus who was crucified was now alive. They could not explain it by natural or scientific laws—no one who died raised to life again. Could this be true? Jesus was alive and it is a miracle?

IF we remember the stories of Jesus performing miracles in his ministry amongst the people, he had the disciples questioning everything. A Roman official believed that Jesus could make his son well again without even being in his presence. He believed but Jesus told him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.' The story from John 4 continues with some of the officials' servants meeting him and telling him that his child was alive. The official wanted to know when this occurred. IT had been at the same hour Jesus had said he would be well. A miracle and both of God and filled with new hope as well. This Roman official believed along with his household. But we might wonder did he believe when Jesus was on the cross? Jesus words also caution us, "Unless you people see signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe.' DO we believe in Jesus' Easter miracle?

This miracle is known as the Resurrection, or when Jesus Christ rose from the dead after dying on the cross. Easter represents the foundation of Christianity as the religion revolves around the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus had performed miracles before—water to wine, healing sick, lame demon possessed. He raised his friend Lazarus from death. But the Easter miracle was what his life's purpose on earth was all about. His life was teaching the Good News of God, that there is grace and love, and mercy offered to all. But not everyone wanted to hear this then or even now. But what occurs when he is crucified and buried leads us all to wonder about the miracle of God raising His Son Jesus to life.

Peter expresses what he witnessed in our reading from Acts 10. "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." He shares this message because he witnessed and shared Jesus' miracle of resurrection from the dead.

The question for you today is simply this. DO you believe in Jesus' Easter Miracle? That he was dead and is alive forever more? DO you believe that Christ is with us now? DO you believe in miracles?

When Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first Easter morning, he showed people that the hope he proclaimed in his Gospel message was real, and so was God's power at work in the world, believers say.

In 1 Corinthians 15:17-22 the apostle Paul describes why the resurrection miracle is so central to Christianity: "...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep or died in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive."

As believers, we say that the resurrection miracle gives all people in this fallen world hope that their suffering can lead to joy. Mother Teresa once said: "Remember that the Passion of Christ ends always in the joy of the Resurrection of Christ, so when you feel in your own heart the suffering of Christ, remember the Resurrection has to come -- the joy of Easter has to dawn. Never let anything so fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of the Risen Christ."

Never let anything so fill you with sorrow- that you forget the joy of the Risen Christ!

SO are you joyful this Easter morning? Are you filled with joy of the Risen Christ?

As we explore the miracles of Jesus and what might be termed miracles of modern times in this season of Easter, God's spirit will move amongst us. Miracles abound but we must look for them! But today let us rejoice and praise God for Jesus' Easter Miracle. It is because Christ is alive that we can face everything with hope. There is new life in Jesus our Saviour. Thanks be to God.

LET US PRAY

God of grace and mercy we praise you and thank you for Jesus is alive and with us now.

WE praise you for this miracle which is the foundation of our faith as followers and believers in Jesus Christ. Be with us O God as we celebrate the joy of this Easter day and enable us to tell your story with renewed hope and faith. Amen.