

Greetings!

Have we become anesthetized to Jesus' death? As a minister I was intrigued several years ago by the movie *The Passion of Christ*, but I was even more fascinated with my observations of those watching this moving story of Jesus' death.

Stories began to emerge of uncontrollable crying, fainting and, yes, even anger that local theaters would show such a movie. However correct or incorrect the movie might have been in its depiction of Jesus' story, there is no doubt that Jesus suffered a horrific death at the hands of the Romans.

Paul writes, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." In whatever form it comes, death is ugly. But, because of Jesus' resurrection, we have a hope that death cannot touch!

That Same Spirit

Darkness engulfed the tomb as the stone rolled into place. As death filled the air of the silent tomb, dampness clung to the linens that wrapped the severely damaged body. There were no angels singing anthems of glory; only demons rejoicing. No other death in all of history ever counted as much as this one man's death. Now it was finished. Nothing else left but to wait; wait and see if He had spoken the truth. Three days and nothing stirred but the tiny creatures living in the cracks and crevices.

Then on the third morning, as the night retreated, shafts of light began penetrating the dark tomb; but where was it coming from? The thick stone walls provided no opening to the light outside. Yet, there is light! With every increasing second, it brightens the darkness. The tiny creatures hide once again in the crevices, running from its brightness. Angels gather. Demons fall silent as all creation awakens to this new day.

The light; nothing can hide from its penetration. It radiates so forcefully that it drives back every evil spirit into the canopies of darkness from which they came to revel in their victory. The linens shift slowly as they are unwrapped by unseen hands; ever so gently they work. Then, a sound, a sound as if the patient who had died upon the operating table comes back to life. A breath is taken, then another. Soon there is movement; He sits upright, as if just awakened from a deep sleep. Spirits scurry through the atmosphere as the message spreads in an instant. "It can't be! He's alive! But it is true – *He is alive!*"

Imagine what it must have been like inside the tomb as the Father began to work on His dead son's body. Romans 6:4 tells us, "Christ was raised by the *glory* of the Father." The "*glory*" of the Father penetrated the hardened rock of history's greatest tomb and filled it with His life giving substance; His *glory*. Death had no chance of survival in its presence.

The Father's *glory* took back what His enemy thought he had stolen from His son – *life*.

We are told in Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead *dwells in you*, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who *dwells in you*."

It is this same Spirit that raised Christ from death that now lives in us, transforming us into His image. Paul tells us in second Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the *glory of the Lord*, are being *transformed into the same image* from glory to glory, just as *by the Spirit* of the Lord."

Listen, there is nothing in your life that cannot be penetrated by your Father's glory! Oppression, darkness and even death itself cannot stand under the weight of His glory. My friend, whatever you're facing, don't give up hope! If a sealed tomb cannot keep out the Father's life giving glory, then what you are facing is nothing to Him!

And that's just a thought . . .

My Final Word

When my father passed away, I did something that took me by surprise. Filing past my father's casket on our way out of the sanctuary, I paused, ripped out a page of my Bible and slid it into the coffin next to my dad. The page contained the description of the new heavens and the new earth from the book of Revelation. Because of my *impulsive* action, my Bible is missing Revelation chapters 20 and 21, and more than once I've had to borrow a Bible to read a portion of these verses at someone's funeral.

As we walked from the church to the gravesite, my mind kept racing over what I had just done. I'm sure the funeral home attendants have seen a little of everything, but I smile now at what they must have thought the day the preacher tore a page from his Bible and stuffed it next to the corpse.

What was I thinking? In my grief, I wanted desperately to convey to my dad the coming resurrection with the new heavens and earth, but as I look back, I think by then, he already knew more than I did. It was really me who needed reassuring.

Isn't it wonderful to know that as we say goodbye to someone we love that death is not the end? One day the trumpet will sound, the angel will shout and the dead in Christ will rise; what a sight that will be! And, it's going to happen because Jesus is risen!

Easter is more than a holiday; it is a reminder that death is not the end!

Living in His glory,

Chris

