

A Story for the Ages

The man called Jesus was dead. His body was taken down from the cross and placed in a borrowed tomb, which was sealed by order of Pilate, Roman governor of Judea. The prophet from Nazareth had been crucified – an ugly, torturous form of capital punishment used by the Romans.

The prestige and might of the Jewish leaders who had brought false charges against Jesus had rolled over Him like a well-oiled war machine. Jesus had been defeated, said the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees. He would be in their hair no more.

The world is dark and gloomy before daybreak on this Sunday morning following the crucifixion. Despair hangs like a cloud over the garden of the tomb. Slowly, the sun's golden rays begin to streak the eastern sky. Day is dawning.

Two women – two of the followers of Jesus – are making their way to the tomb. Those who have claimed to be the friends of Jesus have been scarce since His trial. They have feared the consequences of admitting to be His disciples. But not these women. They came to anoint His body. They are driven by the powerful force of love.

Suddenly, the earth shakes in a manner reminiscent of the events of that black Friday. Look!

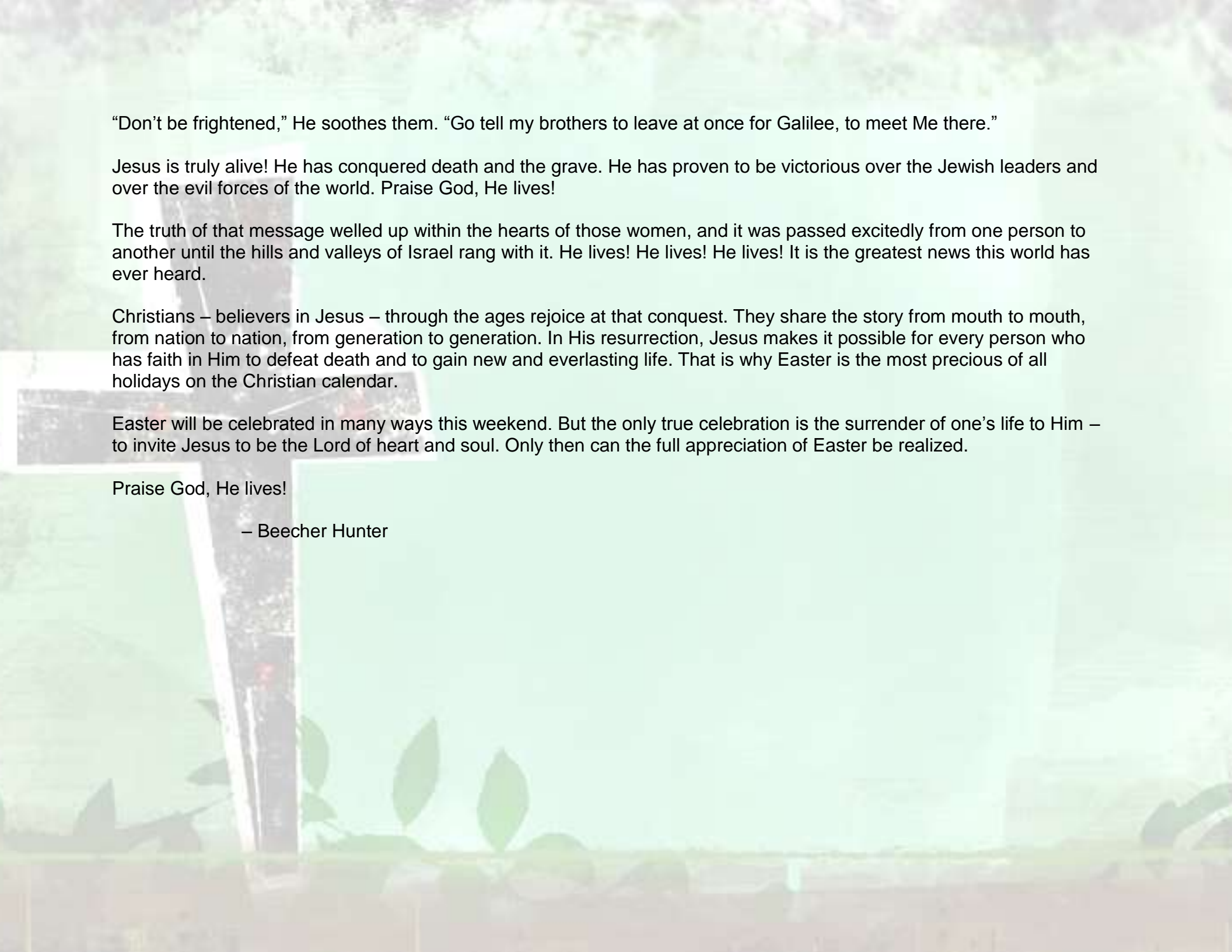
The stone that covered the entrance to the tomb has been rolled aside. And on it, a figure sits. His face is like lightning. His clothing is brilliant white. The Roman guards see him, too, and they faint from fear. It is an awesome sight, indeed.

“Don't be frightened,” he says to the women. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. But He isn't here. He has come back to life again, just as He said He would. Come in and see where His body was lying.”

It is dark in the tomb. The linen cloth that had covered Jesus' body lies limp and flat. The swath that had encircled Jesus' head is rolled in a bundle and lying beside the body cloth. Clearly, there is no corpse here. Jesus is not in the tomb.

Joyously, the women burst from the darkness of the tomb into the light of the new day. As they run, suddenly a Man appears in front of them. It is Jesus. “Good morning,” He says. The women fall to the ground and worship Him.

(more)



“Don’t be frightened,” He soothes them. “Go tell my brothers to leave at once for Galilee, to meet Me there.”

Jesus is truly alive! He has conquered death and the grave. He has proven to be victorious over the Jewish leaders and over the evil forces of the world. Praise God, He lives!

The truth of that message welled up within the hearts of those women, and it was passed excitedly from one person to another until the hills and valleys of Israel rang with it. He lives! He lives! He lives! It is the greatest news this world has ever heard.

Christians – believers in Jesus – through the ages rejoice at that conquest. They share the story from mouth to mouth, from nation to nation, from generation to generation. In His resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for every person who has faith in Him to defeat death and to gain new and everlasting life. That is why Easter is the most precious of all holidays on the Christian calendar.

Easter will be celebrated in many ways this weekend. But the only true celebration is the surrender of one’s life to Him – to invite Jesus to be the Lord of heart and soul. Only then can the full appreciation of Easter be realized.

Praise God, He lives!

– Beecher Hunter