

The Easter Choice

As Easter approaches, I am reminded of a story about a woman named Carol who was the organist at her church. She was an outstanding musician, but she did something no organist should ever do.

She overslept on Easter morning and missed the sunrise service. Obviously, she was embarrassed. Of course, the minister and the congregation forgave her. They teased her about it a little, but it was done lovingly and in good fun.

The next Easter, however, her phone rang at 5 a.m. Jolted awake by the loud ringing, she scrambled to answer it. The caller was the minister, and he said, "Carol, it's Easter morning! The Lord is risen! And I suggest you do the same."

Hopefully, none of you – or me – will oversleep on this coming Easter morning, the most important day on the Christian calendar. It marks the day the followers of Jesus went to His tomb early in the morning and found it empty, for He had risen from the dead.

Even though Christ had told them that He would be crucified, dead and buried, and then, on the third day, He would be resurrected, it took a while for this unimaginable event to become real to them. This was something way out of their experience. The dead simply do not rise from the grave.

Sometimes, we, too, are faced with new realities, and when that happens, we have at least three options for how to respond: (1) we can stay bewildered, let the event knock us flat on our backs and stay there; (2) we can engage in world-class denial by looking at the facts and ignoring them; or (3) we can, slowly perhaps, assimilate the new information. We may get knocked as flat on our backs as the next person by the new realization, but eventually pick ourselves up, embrace the new truth and then go through the long, sometimes painful, process of reassessing life in light of the new evidence.

This is the Easter choice. When faced with the incredible proclamation that Jesus rose from the dead, you can be agnostic and cynical by saying that you don't know what to make of this, but then neither are you going to try. Or you can deny it, claiming that the whole thing is fiction or fantasy. Or you can move past the shock to acceptance.

Here's the caution: If you are going to accept the truth of the bodily resurrection, you need to let it change you totally. That's the Easter choice. The problem for most of us is that we are not surprised enough by Easter to realize we have a choice because Easter has always been a part of the background scenery. We believe it happened, but then we've always believed that. Even Easter has somehow become part of the "routines" of this world. So why would it have much of an effect on what we do tomorrow?

(more)

Easter is viewed by most as such a common pattern in our lives that it surely does not make us reevaluate everything else we think we know. And anyway, we're not sure we want to have everything in our lives changed.

If we can believe in the resurrection at all, accepting the truth that gets proclaimed from every Christian pulpit in the world each Easter Sunday morning, then we have to know that this truth changes everything. This is not some fact we can ponder just once every 12 months. This changes everything – and on every day!

Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they (the women who had come with Him from Galilee), and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" (Luke 24: 1-6 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter

