

Resurrection Matters

An atheist went fishing one Easter morning. He was catching a few, when out of nowhere came the Loch Ness Monster. The monster lifted the boat 100 feet into the air, and was about to eat the atheist, when he prayed: "O God, help me. I don't want to die. But if I do, I'd really like to go to heaven."

Suddenly, everything froze except the atheist. God appeared and said, "I thought you didn't believe in me or heaven." The former atheist said, "Lord, give me a break, two minutes ago, I didn't believe in the Loch Ness Monster either." You see, he discovered when facing trouble and death – resurrection matters.

Two grieving Marys also discovered resurrection matters at the tomb of Jesus. Their friend and Lord had been crucified. He was murdered on a cross. They had come to the tomb that Easter morning to be close to him. Their grief over Jesus' death became magnified when they discovered he was not there.

The women were filled with fear and were wondering, "What has happened to Jesus?" when an angel came and told them, "Do not be afraid." If they were wondering why they should not be afraid, the angel quickly and plainly answered their question, saying, "Jesus is not here. He has been raised."

So, off they went to tell the disciples what the angel had said, when suddenly Jesus was there too. He also told these two Marys, "Do not be afraid," and to tell the disciples he was indeed alive. You see, as they joyfully worshiped him, they discovered resurrection really matters, because Jesus was risen.

This Easter, my family knows just how much resurrection matters too. As I chronicled on Facebook, my wife's mother, Alice Rude, my dear mother-in-law, died April 4th. Even though she was 97, it was a sad moment for us, as we buried her body this week in her hometown. We were sad simply because we will miss her.

So, Jesus' resurrection really matters to us this morning. As we proclaim, "Alleluia! Christ is risen", we will be joyfully thinking in our hearts and minds, that because Jesus is risen, so shall Alice also be raised. Indeed, resurrection matters to us this Easter day, as we think of Alice, alive in heaven, with Jesus.

I wrote on Facebook how Alice, blind as a bat because of macular degeneration, said on Thursday night before she died, "I see a door, and I need the key." We told her, "Alice, Jesus is at the door, so knock. He promised to open it for you." Alice smiled. Oh, my, people of God, resurrection totally matters.

The Apostle Peter learned this too. He experienced firsthand the resurrection of the Jesus, even after he had denied him three times before his death. You know the story. Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed, and indeed Peter did this. He said, "I do not know this man."

The Bible says Peter wept bitterly after this. He was despairing not only at Jesus' fate, but also at his own unwillingness to acknowledge that he was friend of Jesus, and he believed Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God. But fortunately for Peter, the story did not end here. On the third day, Jesus rose.

And the risen Jesus did not condemn Peter, but out of great love and grace, forgave him. So, the resurrection mattered for Peter,

because he experienced the risen Jesus' forgiveness. Yes, the resurrection mattered for Peter, because the risen Jesus reached out to him with love and grace and saved him.

This love gave Peter courage to proclaim the resurrection of the Jesus to many people. Now generation after generation of people have believed, and we see Jesus risen in our lives too. The resurrection really matters to us, because the risen Jesus also greatly loves us, forgives us, and saves us in every way.

So, here we stand today. People who have been told the good news of Jesus' resurrection. We have been told Jesus is alive, present, and active in this world and in our lives, and we believe it. We have experienced it. Resurrection matters to us because we need (we need!) the risen Lord to help us with our lives.

So where in your life do you need the resurrection to matter? What past, present, or future thing in your life needs the good news, the hope, and the grace of the risen Jesus? While you do not face the Loch Ness Monster, what monstrous struggles in your life require the help and attention of the risen Jesus?

As we proclaim Jesus risen today, we look for him to be fully present and living in our hearts and lives. That means whatever we face in life, we look to face it with Jesus standing alongside us, willing to walk with us, willing to take us by the hand, willing to carry us if necessary, through the days of our lives.

For example, when we attend a funeral, and stand looking at the urn or into the casket of someone we love, friend or family, we dare imagine resurrection matters, that there is life beyond this

present reality more wonderful than the world we inhabit now. We see the risen Lord Jesus standing alongside us there.

And when we are facing life's greatest challenges, even Covid-19, we dare imagine resurrection matters, and the risen Lord Jesus stands at our side, willing to help us and lead us through whatever our challenge is. We see the risen Jesus walking with us and talking with us and loving us in those moments.

And when we feel desperate because of some sin we have done, or perhaps a loved one is really struggling and we have no human way to help them, we dare imagine resurrection matters. So, we see the risen Jesus alongside us saying – I forgive your sin, and I promise to help you, and the one you are praying for.

My friends in Christ, the resurrection really matters. Look for the risen Jesus to be with you. Look for the risen Jesus to walk with you, and talk with you, and face your fears with you, because he loves you. Jesus is risen, indeed, and he will care for you every day of your life, and of course, whenever you face death.

It's especially then, the resurrection matters. So, when you see that door, go ahead and knock. Jesus will answer. I promise.

But more importantly, Jesus promises! Amen.