

New Testament April 21: Easter (Week 16)  
328: April 21; Easter (New Testament Week 16)

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Bonus episode right after this with my prison Atonement sermon, since it is so applicable.

### **Easter!**

First, so glad that we are covering Easter in Sunday School! Really nice to have just a bit of a liturgical year in our worship.

#### **What does Easter mean?**

How old were you when you wondered what eggs and bunnies had to do with the resurrection of Jesus?

For as long as there has been agriculture (in temperate climates), humans have celebrated the return of life after the death and struggle of winter. Jews sacrificed lambs during Passover because the Exodus tradition was layered on top of a fertility/life festival, which is why baby lambs were sacrificed (similar to how Succot/tent festival was layered on top of a harvest festival. The tents people lived in to collect the harvest was attached to the tabernacle in the wilderness). Similarly, the Christian celebration of Jesus' resurrection was layered on top of pagan life/fertility/spring celebrations: thus eggs, bunnies, and Jesus.

I'm going to begin with a provocative idea: Resurrection does not matter. Not in the way you think, at least. Worst case, belief in resurrection and the after life can diminish the value and experience of THIS life! (Thinking we will have forever with our loved ones can tempt us to avoid nurturing our relationship now; relying on hope of resurrection can tempt us to avoid doing the work of grief and acceptance that helps us be healthy)

#### **Pagan Easter**

In romance language the word for easter is related to Passover, which directly references the Jewish/Christian event we think of. Interestingly, in Germanic languages including English, we refer to the pagan festival Ostara, celebrating the Goddess Eostre.

(Read section out of my year book)

### **The first easter**

(One of the biggest debates in the time of Paul was future vs. realized eschatology; whether Christians would be resurrected in the future, Paul's view, or whether Christians were already benefiting from a renewed life (Paul's Christian opponents in the Corinthian letters, for example. 1 Cor 4:8 "Already you are rich; already you are kings")

The earliest Christian Creed: "Jesus died and was buried according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-8). Paul was such a controversial figure that it is rare that he emphasizes tradition that has been passed down to him (he was a Christian 15 years before our first letter from him!), but he does it here.

**1 Cor 15:3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **8** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Resurrection according to Mark (not there!!!)

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. **2** And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. **3** And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" **4** And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. **5** And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. **6** And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." **8** And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

(This functionally and dramatically puts the reader/listener in the place of these women and disciples. We have heard Jesus was risen, but do not have evidence. What will we do?)

Resurrection according to Matthew: (Jesus' death was the turning of the age (dead resurrected, "violent earthquake"); Jesus is alive in the Christian community) "Behold I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20)

Resurrection according to Luke: "This isn't what we expected" (Accurate historical reflection)

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. **2** And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. **5** And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? **6** He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, **7** that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." **8** And they remembered his words,**9** and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, **11** but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. **12** But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

**13** That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem, **14** and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. **15** While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. **16** But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. **17** And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. **18** Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" **19** And he said to them, "What things?" And

they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. 22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” 25 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

### **Christian Easter/Holy Week**

I hope that next year I can celebrate the full week:

I think the most significant thing about Holy Week is that it fosters a holistic approach to Easter. It is not cheap celebration; it is full priced, high cost joy. It does not just celebrate life. It celebrates new, glorious, unexpected life after the agony of disappointment, betrayal, loss, rejection, and the death of everything we know.

Sunday: **Palm Sunday** (Triumphal Entry, reflect on celebrating that knowing what is to come. Can we celebrate our worth and potential even knowing there will be failures and transitions and even death?)

Monday: Holy Monday (Anointing at Bethany, royal and burial)

Tuesday: Holy Tuesday (Passion predictions, awareness of transitions, the death of what is)

Wednesday: Spy Wednesday; “Tenebrae” (extinguishing of candles. Betrayal by Judas, reflection on how we betray and are betrayed)

Thursday: Maundy (not Monday, describes ritual of footwashing) Thursday, Last Supper, washing of the feet (reorienting, finding new meaning in old symbols, love and service)

Friday: Good Friday (Crucifixion/Death)

Saturday: Black Saturday (Burial, moments of grief, slowing down, stopping, quiet rest, however painful)

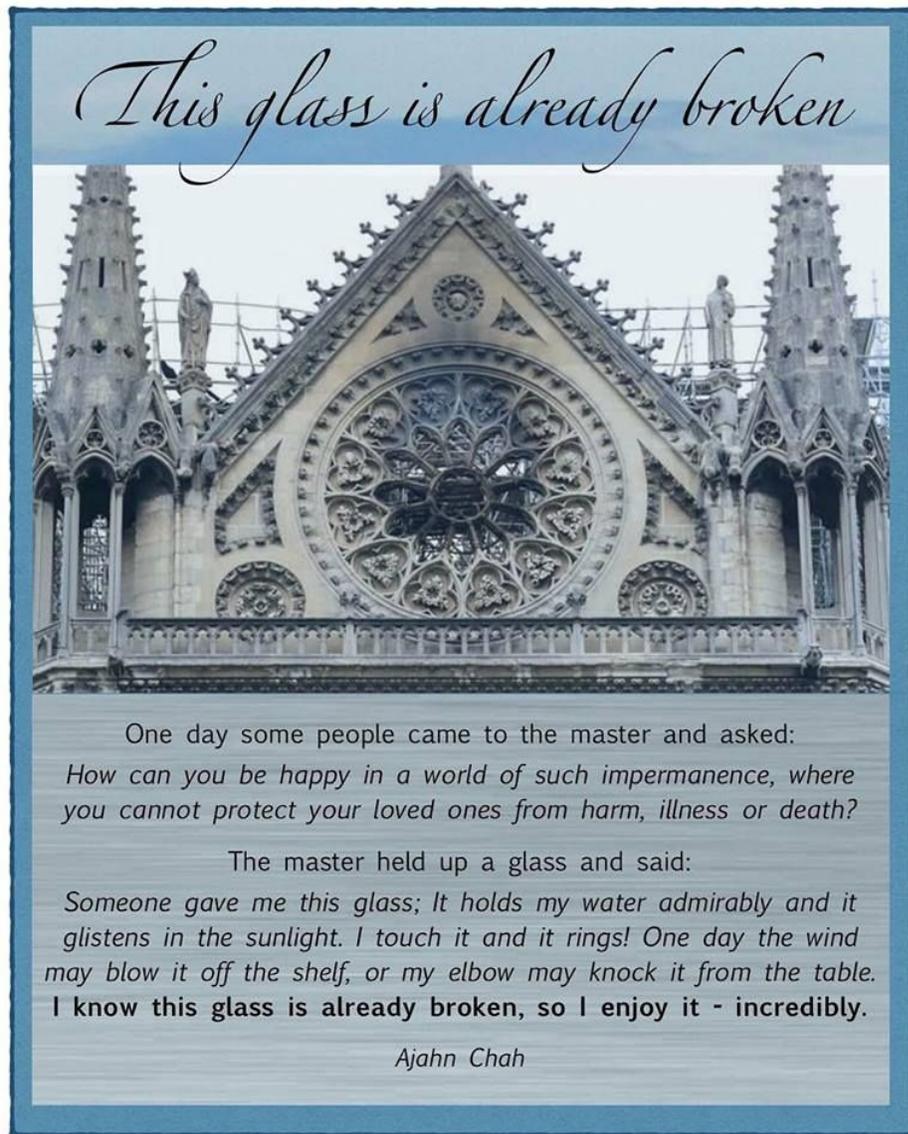
Sunday: Easter Day (Resurrection, new and continuing and renewed life we didn't even know was possible)

### **Resurrection reflections**

How do we walk with Jesus during his most difficult final week? How do we sit with and in our own empty tombs? (EMDR ossuary box)

We are already dead/we are already resurrected

Comment on Notre Dame: Part of the Cathedral's life cycle, and that's ok.



Messenger, Mary Oliver

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird -  
equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young and still not half-perfect? Let me  
keep my mind on what matters,  
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.  
The phoebe, the delphinium.  
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,

Which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes,  
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy  
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,  
telling them all, over and over, how it is  
that we live forever.



It is not about life and death and afterlife. Life and death are the same thing, intimately and excruciatingly connected (Lesson of Shiva). Life lives on death which births more life. We are superorganisms, complex selves dancing with internal and external systems, which mostly we remain unaware of. Biosphere.

Everlasting: (An Easter love poem)

EVERLASTING

Between waves, under the moon's light

after the passing of your smile into memory  
when the last silence falls and your voice  
is no longer heard over the shadows  
of the earth, when even the rain has stopped  
and my memory and my words and my arms  
and my hands that held you have fallen away  
with the tide of time, retreating forever  
into the beckoning everlasting dark;  
when everything we know has gone,  
when my heart has stopped and yours  
no longer calls to mine through the distance  
of our time together, others will live in this life  
and this love and this light, that we have set  
in motion, so that underneath that far off,  
yet to arrive and sheltering darkness,  
underneath the deep, almost touchable nearness  
of all things, underneath the breath of our words  
joining together for this privileged time of times,  
they will see in the distant pin prick stars  
the returning light of the dawn we made together,  
as we live in the light and the love of those  
who came before us, and who helped us to see  
and celebrate and recognize ourselves  
and who brought us here and whose light  
we now pass on, so that even at the end  
of time, even in what looks like silence,  
even in the quietest sense of disappearance,  
even in the far distance of times beyond  
our present understanding, we will be remembered  
in the way others still live, and still live on, in our love.

### **Conclusion: An Early Resurrection**

From Adam Miller's superb book "An Early Resurrection: Life in Christ before you die"

The only way to fold time is to die early. "Think of yourself as dead," Marcus Aurelius says. "You have lived your life. Now take what's left and live it properly." There is something about being alive that makes it hard to live life properly. There is something about being alive that makes it hard to go slow, pay attention, be responsible, and care for life. The only way to rob death of its power is to willingly die. Christ showed this. The only way to save myself from the future's tyranny is to willingly sacrifice that future on God's altar. I have to give the future away. I have to

let it go. I have to stop trusting in it or hoping for it. I have to hand it over to Christ. I have to consecrate the whole of it. And I have to do so while remaining alive and embedded in time.

In Christ, it's possible to die while you're still alive. And having died early, it's possible for your resurrection to begin before you've even left this world. In Christ, time's grip loosens and things start happening out of order. This is what a Christian life looks like: you're born, you're buried with Christ, your resurrection begins, and then you die. If Christ has his way, we'll all die before we're dead and every one of us will yield our lives, here and now, to an early resurrection. If I keep this promise at arm's length, it's because I'm afraid. I don't want to die. I don't want to give up my life. But this, as Paul describes it, is how redemption works. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Though my "old man is crucified with him," still, I live (Romans 6:6). And this new life is lived not just in the spirit but "in the flesh." This redeemed body is real, but it's no longer simply mine. It's Christ's. And if I already share in his resurrection, it's because he now lives in me. Dying to my old life, I've surrendered my name and life for his.

I'm sad I forgot to read this!!

[http://carollynpearson.com/short-writings?fbclid=IwAR3nsB560H9YS\\_jyop6LQD6nhKzqmP6wA3J7DWTvyC2T8to\\_7UHgiMRUCg](http://carollynpearson.com/short-writings?fbclid=IwAR3nsB560H9YS_jyop6LQD6nhKzqmP6wA3J7DWTvyC2T8to_7UHgiMRUCg)

(Personal reflections on life and death, my dad, my brothers, hospice, myself. Letting die past versions of me (refer to divorce story from last episode) Letting go of my \*ideas\* about my life and my fears about my life, I can truly show up to my life)