

Column

Valentine's Day was still a few days off and the store was already filled with goods for the next big season. Shelves heaved with fuzzy stuffed bunnies and baby chickens, chocolate rabbits and edible crosses, gayly coloured baskets and egg dying sets. All of which screamed: Easter is coming. Get ready! Such is the way of successful merchandising.

Easter means different things to different people. For some it means nothing more than a time to get together with family and friends, perhaps with a festive meal. For others it means fun with the children – hiding and finding eggs. For still others, it means putting away the clothes of winter and replacing them with those suited for a new season.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with any of these activities. We need breaks from the harried routine of daily life. Pleasant visits with family and friends are too short and infrequent. Festive meals are always nice. Hiding eggs and watching children find them is a delightful and wholesome family activity. Finally, who wants to be walking around in wool coats and scarves as temperatures surge upward?

But, hopefully Easter and indeed the 40-day season which follows called Easter-tide will mean something more in 2021. Rather than just the things I have mentioned, it will be a time of reflection on a real historical event that changed the world and provides an answer to one of life's ultimate questions: Where am I going?

There is terror in the unknown, and this is certainly the case with the spectre of death. Easter, however, extracts terror and replaces it with a certain and reasonable hope.

“Jesus lives; thy terrors now / Can, O death, no more appall us,” says one of our Easter hymns. But how does the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ – put an end to terror?

Here is my answer. Jesus experienced death for us humans and came out on the other side. In so doing – if we are united to Him in faith and baptism – He has made it safe for us to follow. We can, therefore, name Him not only Saviour, Redeemer, Sin-bearer—but also Forerunner.

Many down through the years – no less than many alive today – have offered opinions about what happens after death, but only One has returned bodily from the grave. To whom are you going to listen?

Jesus promised to go and prepare a place for us. He promised to come again and to receive us unto Himself. He promised never to leave us. In the end, He promised, a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21). Whom are you going to believe?

Humans, it seems, have always had a hunch that there was more to life than birth, struggle and death. Tennyson speaks of this hunch when he writes: "Thou madest man, he knows not why, he thinks he was not made to die."

Is that hunch correct? Easter says, yes. Because He lives, we shall live also!

By all means enjoy the innocent pleasures of the season, but don't stop there. Let the resurrection of Jesus Christ banish fear, instill hope and provide meaning for each new day. Death is vanquished. Heaven won. Alleluia!

O God, who for our redemption didst give thine only begotten Son to the death of the Cross, and by his glorious resurrection hast delivered us from the power of our enemy; Grant us so to die daily from sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through the same thy Son Christ our Lord. Amen.

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