

Easter gladness, not sadness

By Beverly Goldsmith

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It's Easter again. For many people here in Australia, this means crisp autumn mornings, the smell of oven-warmed hot cross buns, and children hoping to receive brightly wrapped chocolate eggs from family members or friends. Some people will visit their favorite camping spots during this holiday period. Others will observe the religious significance of the season.

While those who live "down under" usually enjoy this time of year, there are some who don't. A friend made me aware of this. Normally a bright, happy person, she looked down-hearted the day I came across her in the supermarket. When I gently inquired what the matter was, she said, "Oh, nothing really. It's just Easter." Then she confided, "I get sad thinking of Jesus and the cross. I feel so sorry that he died. I find it all so depressing, don't you?"

In the past I would have agreed with her. For a number of years I, too, experienced deep sorrow each Good Friday. But now things are different for me. The unhappy feelings are gone. The understanding that Jesus' experience is about Life not death, about triumph not defeat, about gladness not sadness, vanquished the gloom.

The cross and grave are an integral part of Jesus' history, but they do not constitute all of it. Nor are they the climactic ending to his ministry. The Bible records that after his crucifixion and entombment, Jesus rises and comes forth from the sepulcher, he speaks with a woman named Mary, and he meets and talks with his disciples (see John, chaps. 20,21). For another forty days, he teaches and encourages those who will carry on his Christly mission of healing (see Luke, chap. 24; Acts, chap.1). In other words, Jesus' life and work continued here on earth, until his ascension.

Why, then, should we focus only on the crucifixion, and annually mourn that occurrence? Jesus' momentous resurrection experience gives hope, for it proves man's indestructible, spiritual nature. In the larger context of events, this is cause for tremendous joy, not for sadness. Through God's power, Jesus raised himself from the grave. He triumphed over hatred. He healed himself of pain. He restored his body. He overcame death. He was victorious. His revival and recovery are an outstanding demonstration of life triumphant over suffering and death. Yet it was by no means a single, isolated incident.

In the period leading up to the crucifixion, Jesus healed many people of all kinds of maladies. He not only cured the sick and the dying, but also restored to life Jairus's daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, and his good friend Lazarus (see Luke 8: 41,42,49-56, Luke 7: 11-17, John 11: 1-44). These instances of healing, like Jesus' resurrection itself, were the natural outcome of spiritual understanding and the practice of God's law. They confirm that divine Life, God, is eternal and triumphant over death.

Eternal life is not just a nice religious concept; it is demonstrable truth. Isn't that why Jesus declared, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"? (John 10: 10) He also said, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8: 51). Those who fully accept and thoroughly follow Jesus' teachings can also demonstrate man's victory over sin and mortality.

Peter, a disciple of Jesus, proved this when he restored Dorcas to life (see Acts 9: 36-41). And Paul, who never met Jesus but practiced what he taught, brought Eutychus to life after he had fallen from the equivalent of a second-story window (see Acts 20: 7-12). Such examples of God's healing and saving power guide us to the spiritual understanding of Life.

Mary Baker Eddy, who was a devout follower of Jesus, explains how to heal as he did in her book *Science and Health*. Speaking of her own healing work she says, "The author has healed hopeless organic disease, and raised the dying to life and health through the understanding of God as the only Life" (p. 428).

And she offers this example from her extensive record of healing. "I was called to visit Mr. Clark in Lynn, who had been confined to his bed six months with hip-disease, caused by a fall upon a wooden spike when quite a boy. On entering the house I met his physician, who said that the patient was dying.... Mr. Clark lay with his eyes fixed and sightless. The dew of death was on his brow. I went to his bedside. In a few moments his face changed; its death-pallor gave place to a natural hue. The eyelids closed gently and the breathing became natural; he was asleep. In about ten minutes he opened his eyes and said: "I feel like a new man. My suffering is all gone." ...

"I told him to rise, dress himself, and take supper with his family. He did so. The next day I saw him in the yard. Since then I have not seen him, but am informed that he went to work in two weeks" (*ibid.*, pp. 192-193).

The Bible and *Science and Health* explain how each of us can learn to destroy fear, overcome sin, heal ourselves and others, and demonstrate our oneness with divine Life and Love. It's encouraging to know that many people around the world are learning to follow Jesus' example and to conquer sickness and death through spiritual means alone.

We needn't be sad at Easter. This annual Christian observance commemorates the resurrection of Christ Jesus. It's a sacred celebration of the Way-shower's triumphant victory over death and the grave. Rejoice in Jesus' glorious example. Be glad.

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