



## HAVE YOU SEEN THE LORD?

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006

[John 20:1-9](#) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus'

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Do you sense the fragrance of the lilies and enjoy their tender beauty all around us? They are silent witnesses to the heart of our Christian faith. It is Easter again – today Christians across the world are greeting one another with confirmations of faith in a living Christ. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed! No matter how diverse and often contradictory the different understandings of Christianity of the first Easter might be, we are all bound together by a common faith in Jesus Christ – Our Living Lord!

Easter is a good time for Christians to witness, think, or talk about death and life after death. But, before we get into that, let me tell you about a little human incident ~ although, let me confess ~ I personally do not believe ever really happened!

It is the story about some airline baggage handlers who retrieved an animal carrier from the luggage bay of an airliner. As they removed the carrier, they made a gruesome discovery--the dog inside was dead. The baggage handlers panicked. What now? There might be a lawsuit! I might lose my job! What can we do? To win time they

decided to tell the woman passenger that her dog had unfortunately been sent to another destination by mistake. It is not at all uncommon for baggage to be sent to the wrong city. ☺ They promised her they would find her dog and have it delivered to her. With that assurance, the woman went home. The baggage handlers then quickly buried the woman's pet. Afterward, they set out to find another dog to replace the animal that had died. Finally, they found a dog that was a dead ringer for this woman's pet. They put the substitute dog in the animal carrier and sent it to the woman's address. The woman took one look at the dog and exclaimed, "That's not my dog! My dog is dead; I was bringing it home for burial."

All Christianity agrees on the eternal nature of the life and message of Jesus Christ. The mystery of life and death and life after death remains a mystery to this day. Martin Luther, the Protestant Church Reformer, expressed our not-knowing about the details of an afterlife with a particularly appropriate analogy. Luther said, "We can know as much about life beyond death as an unborn baby traveling down the birth canal and ~ about to be born can know about the world it is about to enter. How much is that? Nothing! Yet the Luther's comparison affirms his belief that there is something at the end of the journey. In the midst of this uncertainty, we can be confident of one thing: when we die, we do not die into nothingness but we die into God.

The roots of the word **confidence** mean, "what goes with faith" (**con** = with, **fides** = faith). Faith as trust in God includes the confidence so obvious in Paul's words: If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we BELONG TO the Lord.

It is the same confidence Paul expresses in Romans 8, "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But we **can** know what salvation means in **this** life. At the center of the biblical understanding of salvation is a relationship with God in the present, whose gifts are **freedom, joy, peace, and love** and whose fruits are **compassion and justice**.

The ultimate goal of the Christian life is to have a relationship with God, and all that flows from it, through the LIVING CHRIST! The invitation of the Christian Message is to enter into a relationship **in which our healing and wholeness can be found**, that relationship which transforms us by beginning to heal the wounds of existence and makes our lives **in the here and now** a life with God.

The Bible describes different incidents of how difficult it was then, and **many in our time will tell you** that it **still is not easy** to come to grips with the concept of a Risen Christ. The biblical stories include that of a doubting **Thomas** who needed to see before he could believe – and that of the **Emmaus walkers** who only became aware of who Jesus really was while they were breaking bread, exactly as Jesus taught at the last supper. Once again the question comes, "**Have you seen the Lord?**" How vivid in my memory – how precious did that grace appear – the hour I first believed? **A personal Easter question for each one of us** - Have you seen, with your spiritual eyes, who the Living Christ really is? Do you also sense a presence in the same question? Have **you** seen the Lord? Who knows, maybe on this Easter Morning, you will be able to say. **O yes, now I have seen and I know my Lord!**

So, while the mystery of life and death still remains a mystery for our mortal minds, we **can** celebrate EASTER with all our hearts. As children we used to sing: **He lives, he lives, ~ Christ Jesus lives today He walks with me and he talks with me ~ along life's narrow way. He lives, he lives, ~ Christ Jesus lives today ~ you ask me how I know he lives! I know he lives here in my heart!**

Because he lives our weeping has ended; my sunset of despair has turned into a sunrise of hope! Because he lives I can walk into the future without any fear. Because I have discovered the Lord in my life, my life has purpose and my life has meaning.

In person I have never seen the Lord  
But in faith, again and again!

**AMEN**