

Life after resurrection

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [April 18, 2012](#) issue



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For the first time in decades I did not preach on Easter Sunday, so I didn't have the homiletical challenge of telling a familiar story in a way that conveys its startling power. Instead I'm thinking more about what it means to live in a world where a resurrection has happened.

Today we have Easter and Christmas, but I miss the old way of referring to Eastertide and Christmastide. The intent was to designate an extended season rather than a single day, and I need the reminder that while each of the two events—the birth of the baby and the appearance of the risen Christ—is loaded with power and potential for glorious celebration, both are far more.

Eastertide and Christmastide are for the exploration and consideration of worldview-changing realities. Preachers know that while Easter Sunday is great fun, with gorgeous flowers, glorious music and full sanctuaries, the most important Sundays in the church year are the Sundays afterward, when we are left, as were Jesus' disciples, with the meanings and implications of what happened and the sense that nothing can ever be the same.

What does it mean to live in a world in which a resurrection happened? For one thing, we live with the proclamation that goodness and truth are not ultimately overwhelmed by evil and untruth, regardless of what is transpiring at any particular

historical moment. There are days when that sounds farfetched, unrealistic and naive. Reality in this world is the murder of 17 Afghan adults and children by a profoundly disturbed American soldier, or the killing of a 17-year-old black youth by a neighborhood vigilante whose act is backed by a Florida law that justifies shooting in response to any perceived threat of violence, or the threat of Iran apparently creating nuclear weapons even as it trumpets the vilest anti-Semitism, or of Israel considering a preemptive strike that would precipitate a much wider conflict, while its lethal occupation of Palestine goes to the back burner. It takes a strong faith, or foolish naïveté, to keep working for peace, justice and reconciliation.

When Jesus died on Good Friday, his followers lost that faith. Until Jesus' death, they had begun to think that what he was saying and doing was good and true; that contrary to conventional wisdom, peacemakers, the meek and the seekers after goodness were the blessed and truly happy ones. They had begun to believe that it is better to give than to receive, that forgiveness is always better than retaliation, that in order to live fully one has to find ways to give of one's life, and that including the outcast and marginalized is better than excluding them—all of that was shattered when the powers of the world decided that Jesus should be crucified.

Political and religious authority demonstrated the world's reality—that Jesus was unrealistic, dangerous and should be eliminated for the good of all. But then came a resurrection! For the disciples, this meant that his ideas were true, that working for their realization would always be holy work, work worth living and dying for.

Everything is different because we now live in a world where death did not have the final word, where truth and goodness and love are the final realities, and where a resurrection happened.