

Awakening to the Living Christ

Easter Message and Meditation

3-31-24

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Meditation Adapted from Prayers of the Cosmos, by Neil Douglas-Klotz

Father- Mother of the Cosmos

Oh Thou! The breathing life of all,
creator of the shimmering sound that echoes in us.

Source of Sound: in the roar and the whisper,
in the breeze and the whirlwind
we hear your name

You create all that moves in light
Focus your light within us - make it useful

As we breathe one holy breath

Help us let go, and let be
clear the space inside us of forgetfulness:

Create your reign of unity now-
through our fiery hearts and willing hands

Help us love beyond our ideals

and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures,
Creating Divine cooperation...

we feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.

Untangle the knots within
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.

Free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.

From you is born our power and Life,
the song that beautifies all-- from age to age it renews.

And so it is. Amen.

- Confessions of a minister raised Catholic, on preaching on Easter and Christmas!
More than “ordinary sundays” these Christian holy days invite me to confront, to notice, to welcome MY own journeying with what I believe, what I don’t believe,

what I've experienced in Spirit, how I put into practice the message and teachings of this Wayshower

- Spiritual writers from Mark Hicks on Truthunity.net, to Richard Rohr, to Diana Butler Bass have led me to the work of John Dominic Crossan and Marcus J. Borg. Last year I bought the book *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem...* this year, read it! At least I did my first reading– because it's a book I will need to go back to again, probably multiple times, as food for contemplation.

Let's listen to Mark's gospel account:

Mark 16:1-8

16:1 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

16:3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

16:4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

16:5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

16:6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.

16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

16:8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

I'll set aside for today that it is *Mary Magdalene and the women* who first hear the news of the risen Christ, and the menfolk don't quite believe them... But here is my invitation to consider what is at stake as we Awaken to the Living Christ.

Borg and Crossan write:

“...we are convinced that an emphasis on the historical factuality of the Easter stories, as if they were reporting events that could have been photographed, gets in the way of understanding them...it is a stumbling block for people who have difficulty believing that these stories are factual. [the differences in the gospel stories] are difficult to reconcile, and their language often seems to be other than the language of historical reporting.

Moreover, focusing on the factuality of these stories often misses their more-than-factual-meanings. When treated as if they are primarily about an utterly unique spectacular event, we often do not get beyond the question, ‘Did they happen or not?’ to the question, ‘what do they mean?’”

In the story of the Good Samaritan in the parable of Jesus, the *truth* of the story is not dependent on whether there was literally a time when a man from Sumeria came to the rescue of Jewish man who had been beaten and robbed. The meaning of the story is embedded in its *truth* whether or not the event itself is *factual*: help your neighbor, give aid to those in need.

Borg and Crossan continue:

“Seeing the Easter stories as parables does not involve a denial of their factuality...What it does insist on is that *the importance of the stories lies in their meanings*...an empty tomb without meaning ascribed to it is simply an odd, even if exceptional, event. It is only when meaning is ascribed to it that it takes on significance... ‘Believe what you want about whether the stories happened this way– now let’s talk about what they mean.’ If you believe the tomb was empty, fine; now, what does this story mean? If you believe Jesus’ appearances [after the resurrection] could have been videotaped, fine; now, what do these stories mean? And if you’re not sure about that, or even if you are quite sure it *didn’t* happen this way, fine; now, what do these stories mean?”

So, what does this story mean to us today?

"Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.

The story of an empty tomb means little without remembering the events that led to the

crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. This Jesus taught in his ministry, in words and actions, how to resist both the domination of empire– and the collusion of the powers of the religious with the imperial powers of empire. That subversive teacher ate with the powerless, the marginalized, the oppressed and forgotten ones of his day. He made the “powers that be” afraid of a revolution, and so he was killed. But the revolution was not one of might– it was one of Love.

“ ‘Jesus is Lord,’ the most widespread post-Easter affirmation in the New Testament is thus, both personal and political. It involves a deep centering in God... that includes the radical trust in God we see in Jesus...It produces freedom, compassion and courage. This deep centering also involves... loyalty and commitment to God's passion as disclosed in Jesus, a passion for compassion, justice, and non-violence. Compassion–love– is utterly central to the message and life of Jesus... and justice is a social form of compassion...love is the soul of justice and justice is the body, the flesh, of love.

In Unity thought, we learn to *see* the world right, more than to *set* the world right. Yet when we SEE this living Christ in our present moment, and we SEE the world in its wholeness, and we SEE the Oneness that IS us and all of creation– we must also still hold the paradox that our sisters and brothers and the Earth herself are trembling under the weight of empire, of war, of oppression. In that paradox of seeing the cross AND the empty tomb, we are called to a personal transformation, and we are called to a communal transformation.

If we can die to our inner judgements, to our killing thoughts and words directed at ourselves or others, then we will also arise to the renewal of our relationships in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our community and in the world. We rise above our fears, and rise into the deep truth that despite all appearances to the contrary, death does not have the final answer. As we embody the Christ within, Love– not an easy, sentimental, baby chicks and bunnies kind of love– but Love that says yes to whatever is called forth on the journey– that Love continues to transform us. Always and in all ways.