

Of the four prominent religions of the world resting on personalities, Christianity is the only one that even talks about an empty tomb in relation to its founder. Abraham and Mohammed lie in well-maintained graves, and Buddhist scripture says that when Buddha died it was “with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind.”

But when it comes to Jesus, we have something else. We have a broken seal, a stone rolled away from the door and an empty tomb. With Jesus, there is no monument to visit. He lives and is ruling over all things, for He is risen, just as He said. And because He has risen, we can boldly claim that Jesus is the Son of God. His teachings are true, God has accepted the sacrifice of his Son for the reconciliation of the world and all believers in Jesus will rise to eternal life. Easter is about an empty grave—for Jesus and for you. And the power of his resurrection cannot possibly be confined to one day on the calendar—it is a river of life that carries us along every single day.

The empty Easter tomb signals that God’s mission of rescuing human beings for eternal life is complete. Jesus has done it all. Mission accomplished. Why did God come up with this plan? Why did Jesus go through with it? He treasures you. He loves and treasures you, even when you do not love or treasure Him.

Was there a day this past week that you planned without first taking your schedule to the Lord in prayer? Have you been trying to salvage a crumbling relationship by purely human means? Have you agonized in loneliness and wondered why God isn’t speaking to you—and yet your Bible remains closed, your baptism forgotten, and Holy Communion ignored as a living source of God’s power?

Truly, when you and I examine our lives, we must confess that we often live as if Jesus didn’t really exist as a personal reality in our lives. We live the “as if” life—as if Jesus were still in the tomb, dead, and not alive in our hearts and homes today. The apostle Paul speaks for all of us when he says, “My own behavior baffles me. For I find myself doing what I really loathe...I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power...the evil I don’t really want to do I find I am always doing...who can set me free from the prison of this mortal body? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

You and I can say, “Lord, be merciful to us sinners. And thank you, Jesus, that there is a way out of the tomb of selfishness.” It is Jesus who leads the way out of the tomb. It’s Jesus who is the way out of the grave. Jesus was crucified and buried to cancel out your sins; he stood outside of the tomb that first Easter so that you can be confident that you will also stand outside of your tomb on the Day he returns. Your grave will not be able to hold you down. The reality of Jesus’ resurrection changes everything. It is the defining event in the history of this world. Will you let it be the defining event in your life? Will you let the reality of a living, personal God change everything about you?

In the gospel reading for this Easter we see Mary Magdalene come face to face with her resurrected Teacher. I don't think it's possible to put into words the emotional impact this encounter would've had on Mary. And yet, Jesus says, "Don't hang onto me or this moment, Mary. You need to go and tell that you have seen Me." If the resurrection of Jesus is real to you and me, then we are going to talk about it. We are going to be sent the way Mary was sent. We are going to tell others about a Savior who died but came back to life and is still alive. We're going to speak about the risen Jesus in the hospital and the rehab center; the nursing home and the funeral home; and especially at the graveside. We won't let the name of Jesus go unsaid. How can we, when we know that He has defeated death and stands outside of the tomb?

There was a young administrative assistant in an office building who exemplified what I am talking about. Jesus was a personal reality in her life, and she did talk about him with other people. In fact, she made such an impression on a young man who visited the office building one day that he wrote a letter to her employer. He told her boss how he had come into that man's office, lonely and scared to death about working again. He needed to talk to someone. So when the woman at the desk greeted him, he asked if there were any jobs available, and if there weren't that was okay. And he said, if only a person had something to count on, or something worth dying for, then things wouldn't be so bad.

Then he related how the woman smiled, and said, "Jesus is coming through and He's worth dying for." He said he just stared at the woman because she talked as if Christ was alive and a good pal of hers. In fact, he recalled, he was so struck by her comments that he sort of expected Jesus to walk through the door. It was that real.

He was only in the office ten minutes, but the brief encounter made such an impression on him that it changed him somehow. He was no longer scared like he was before. He wrote: "It was as though she had said, 'I want to make you acquainted with my Friend Jesus. You ought to get to know each other since He'll be going your way.'" I'm nineteen and I never knew before that there was a God like that who would go along with a guy like me."

"I never knew before that there was a God like that." That's the God that you can know in Jesus Christ—a God who is real and alive—a God who moves us to "show and tell" others about Him so that His power can change their lives, too.

Life-changing power is available to you today. Unlike other religions whose founders lie in tombs, the tomb of Jesus is empty. He is risen, just like he said he would be. Because of this, you can be sure that nothing can stand in the way of your connection to Him. He wants you to let Him live at the center of your life right now. He wants you to let Him remove the crippling power of fear from your life. He can do this because He stands outside of his own tomb. Trust Him to pull you out of yours.