

## Facing the Tomb

*By Linda Rex*

***April 9, 2023, Resurrection Day or Easter Sunday***—Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Monday was another one of those days. An active shooter at a local private elementary school and now children and adults are dead. I think of the families whose hearts are being wrenched by this tragedy. I think of the nurses and doctors trying to save the lives of the victims and being unable to. I think of the teachers and staff who could not protect the children. And I am caught in the anger of grief and loss.

Death comes in unexpected ways, and disrupts our ordinary life, bringing unwanted changes and loss. We forget sometimes about the ordinariness of death—that it happens to everybody. It's a fact of our human existence right now. We may hide it in our mortuaries and cemeteries, but we still have to live with it and come to terms with the reality of it. Each of us has to face it in some way. We cannot escape it.

The comfort we have this day is that death no longer reigns triumphant over us. Death was summarily put in its place over two thousand years ago, as Jesus Christ allowed himself to be crucified, the Son of God in human flesh dying for us. Our Savior entered the gates of death, undaunted by its threat of decay and darkness. He willingly laid his human body down in the tomb, wrapped in graveclothes and scented by funeral spices. And there his body lay as he entered the gates of death.

But good news! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Death could not hold Jesus. No, death was impotent in the face of the resurrection power of God. Jesus arose and walked out from his tomb, unbound by the limitations of our human flesh, for now his was a glorified human body. Not only that, but this glorious new life went home with him into the presence of his heavenly Father. Now in the Spirit, we find our life is hidden with Christ in God.

It's important for us to wrestle with the challenges of living out our human life on this earth. We are given the challenge of finding ways to facilitate the safe and healthy instruction of our children while allowing them the freedom to grow and develop in warm, caring environments. We have the challenge of making our societies places where people want to care for others rather than harm them, while ensuring that those who do harm others deal with the consequences of their actions and are offered the means to learn better ways of living. This, within a broken culture, which values each person's freedom to decide for themselves how to live.

And we must face and wrestle with death—with all its devastation, loss, and grief. How do we do all this? It seems an insurmountable task. And here is where we need reminded once again that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Where we keep our focus affects how we live our everyday lives. The apostle Paul, in Colossians 3:1-4, reminds us to keep our minds and hearts on things above, where Jesus Christ is right now, today, in face-to-face relationship with his Father in the Spirit. There, in his crucified but risen life in joyful fellowship with his Father is our own life. We may suffer, grieve, and experience loss here on earth, but there we are held, loved, cared for and blessed.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! This Resurrection Day, may you find comfort and encouragement in the reality that you have real life, right now, in relationship with your Father and mine, and his Son Jesus, in the Spirit, in that warm fellowship which is ours now into

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eternity. And whatever losses you may experience now are only a temporary sorrow to be eclipsed by the joy of the life to come in the new heavens and new earth. As we keep our focus on things above, no matter what comes our way, we receive the faith, hope, and love we need to bear it, knowing we are held in God's love and grace by a Savior who knows exactly what we are going through, having been there himself.

*Dearest Jesus, we celebrate with you the joy of your resurrection! Heavenly Father, thank you for including us in Christ, in his life with you in the Spirit. Grant us the grace to keep our hearts and minds on things above, rather than on earthly things. Amen.*

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Colossians 3:1-4 NIV*