

Christ Is Alive In You

Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019

"You ask me how I know he lives?" the old gospel hymn questions. And the answer it offers is not, "because I believe in the doctrine of the resurrection," or even "because the Bible tells me so." Instead, the hymn writer tells us "I know that Christ is alive" because... "**he lives within my heart.**"

When some people hear such words, they may be inclined to dismiss them as a mere sentimentality, which is not concerned with the "facts" of the matter, not able to "prove" that the resurrection of Jesus actually happened, as scripture describes it.

This is quite a limited, and jaded, point of view, as I see it. And yet, it is quite common. We live in an age that in many ways has lost its sense of the transcendent, lost its faith in an Ultimate Reality that lies beneath and beyond the physical world we perceive with our five senses. Within this narrow point of view, there is indeed no possibility of transcendental knowledge, no possibility of knowing something that is beyond what the five senses can perceive. Statements like the hymn writer makes about how he knows that Christ is alive become unintelligible. They are simply not on the horizon.

In the Church, and indeed within all of the major religions, we work to cultivate a broader horizon, one in which transcendental knowledge, knowledge that is revealed to us by God, is not only possible, it gives us the spiritual wisdom that we need for living.

"You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart."

I hear wisdom in these words. I hear a knowledge that **transcends** the feverish search for physical facts to somehow "prove" the truth of the resurrection. Such attempts become meaningless to us in the face of knowing that Christ is actually alive and somehow, mysteriously, dwelling within our hearts and minds and bodies.

As we come to experience this grace, we simultaneously realize a number of things. We realize that the Mystery we call 'God' truly **is** like Jesus, truly **is** Love, truly **is** Non-Violent, Humble, Self-Giving, and Compassionate. We realize that we are really not alone inside, and that we are truly safe inside, no matter what happens outwardly. We come to realize that **there is much more to us** than our own egos, however balanced or imbalanced they may be; that God within us can actively inspire our wills, our thoughts, and words, and deeds; so that we become persons of genuine good will, actual agents of the *Divine Will*. These are not things that mortal men or women can teach us, as Jesus once told Peter. We come to realize that such knowledge is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and that it is saving knowledge. It heals us, completes us, makes us whole.

How do we come to **know** such truths? We come to know them through an actual **encounter** with the Risen Christ, *not unlike* the encounter that Mary Magdalene has in this morning's gospel text. And yet, the encounter we have with Jesus is not an encounter *in a literal, physical sense*. It may indeed make us **feel** like we are standing in the tomb, communing with the One we feared was never to be found, discovering that he is alive and well. And this feeling is not mere sentimentality. It is an integral part of the transcendental knowledge that

God, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is conveying to us.

Practically, our encounter with the Risen Christ, always seems to occur within a particular context, the context which our older prayer book calls "The Mystical Body" of Christ -- the fellowship of all those, in heaven and on earth, who have discovered that Christ is alive within them, all those who have realized that there is more to them than their own egos, and who are becoming persons of good will, becoming genuine agents of the Divine Will.

Let me say that again. I come to believe in the Resurrection when Christ becomes alive to me through the lives of those who have already awakened to the Reality of Christ within them.... Those who have already become disposed, by grace, to let their own egos be silent enough for the Living Christ to speak **to me through them**. When that happens, it is a miracle. I receive the gift of faith through how they are relating to me. They see Christ in me, I see Christ in them, and, through them, I come to see Christ in myself. And that changes everything.

When I get up here to preach, if I am disposed, by grace, to let my own ego be silent enough for the Living Christ to speak to you through me, you will hear a Divine Word, a Living Word, that may change your life. It's a miracle. When that happens, it's not simply me. A Living Word may have come out of my mouth. It may have been processed in my brain, but its real Source is the Living Mind of Christ within me.

When Mark, this morning's candidate for Baptism, is disposed, by grace, to let his own ego be silent enough for Christ speak to him from within – a miracle will happen. He will come to know, more fully than he already does, that Christ is alive within him. He will come to know it through all the love that he has received thus far in his life; through our love for him in this congregation; through the love of our forebears, who handed down for him the sacred words and symbols that he will experience this morning in the baptismal liturgy. Behind and within and through all of these human acts of love, the love of God in Christ will be poured into Mark's heart by the Holy Spirit. Just as it is for each of us.

Thanks be to God.

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