



MODERATOR'S EASTER MESSAGE 2026

Easter is upon us and the principalities and powers are once again raging using the human propensity for evil to wreak havoc on human society, whether it's on the big stage of world affairs or the husband beating his partner and children down the street.

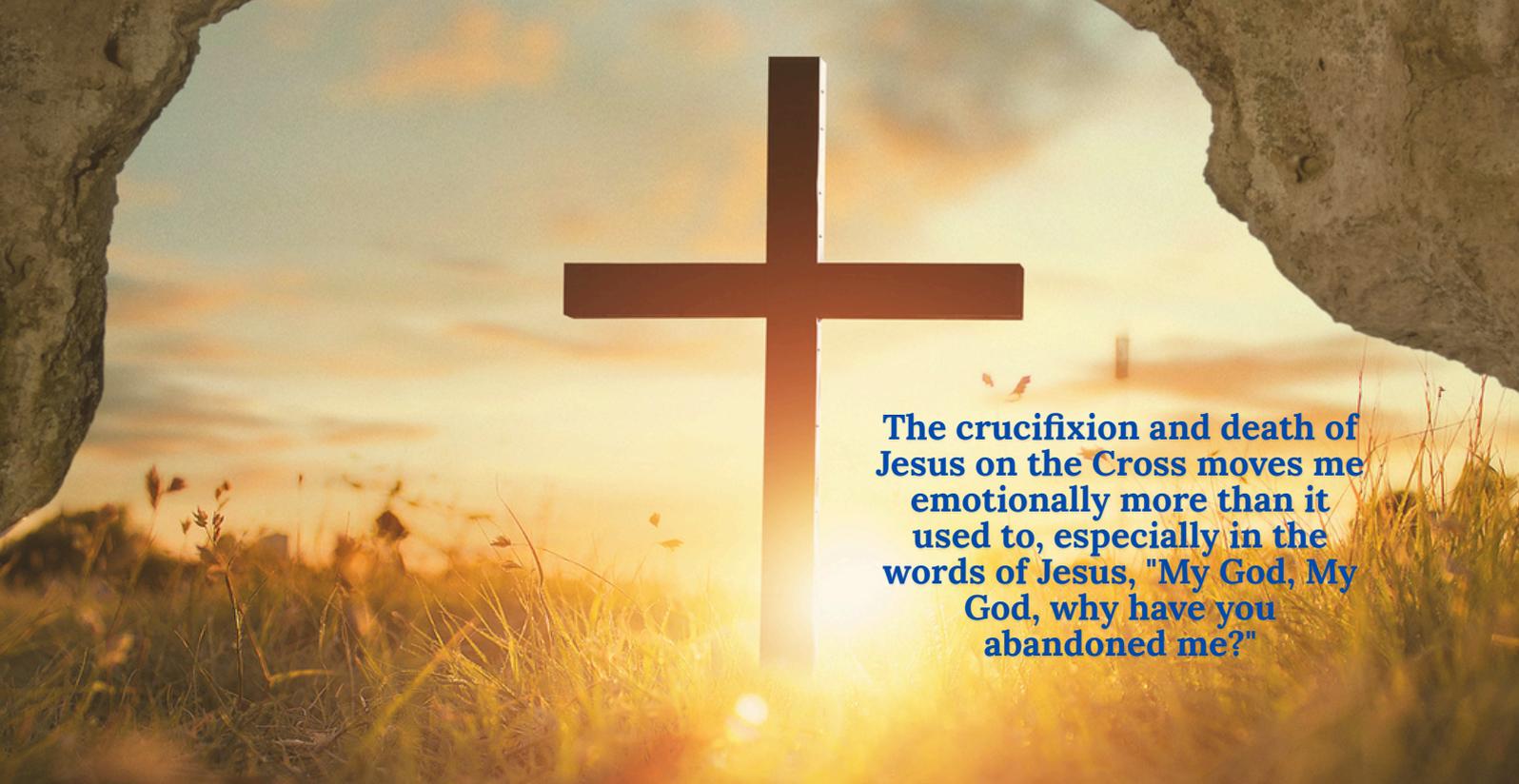
Once, I thought humans were basically good and ethically responsible all the time. Some still put the case that human evolution and development will lead us into a new era of enlightenment when that will be true. That view was demolished once and for all for me by a philosophy lecturer who took our class on a journey exploring the questions, "Could the Nazi regime, or similar, happen in New Zealand under the right circumstances?" "Could any one of us be a war criminal and kill innocent people while looking them in the eye?" Our class of about 20 students ended up saying yes to both propositions, and it silenced all of us because of what it meant. That experience was part of my understanding the why of the Easter story.

In Jeremiah 17 the prophet comes to terms as to why Judah rejected God and linked itself spiritually to the world views of its pagan neighbours, where ordinary people became objects to be used in the spiritual practice of making recompense to the gods through human sacrifice and other detestable rituals. Where political rulers sought absolute power for themselves at any cost. Verse 9 is the prophet's conclusion: "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" God knows.

It can't be fully explained in a paragraph or two of course. But in Jeremiah's world that produced that dire analysis of the human condition, God was there. As I often say to people, do not worry about the future, God is already there. In Jeremiah 28 the prophet makes reference to "the righteous descendent from David's line". Ultimately Jesus Christ is there in Jeremiah's future.

I think of Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday in terms of being the pinnacle story of the Incarnation. Why was Jesus born of the Virgin Mary as the Son of God, fully human and fully divine? God's fulfilment of the Old Testament hope of the coming Messiah and the coming of the Kingdom of God to bring true justice and peace for the People of Israel and all who believe in him from the gentile world. And now that the death and resurrection of Christ is an historical event to contemplate, those of us who do believe are looking forward backwards to the Kingdom of God being fulfilled on earth. At this time, that seems as far away for us as it did for Jeremiah in a sense. How long, O Lord, until you return to put all things right?

The crucifixion and death of Jesus on the Cross moves me emotionally more than it used to, especially in the words of Jesus, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" Was that the cry of the humanity of Jesus Christ, or his divinity as the Son of God. It is both and. What does sinful humanity face at judgement? Abandonment, as you follow the description of judgement through the Scriptures. This is an anathema if you hang onto the notion of the instinctive goodness of humankind of course. Jesus, the Son of God, taking on the nature of humankind, being fully human and fully God, became the subject of God's fierce judgement of humanities sin on the Cross. Because the humanity and divinity of Jesus cannot be separated, that cry of anguish I imagine was heard in every spiritual realm, with rejoicing in at least one of them. Jesus was judged and died for the sins of the world as the atoning sacrifice to give life and peace to all humanity. And those who put their faith in Christ receive that life and peace.



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I think of Resurrection Sunday. Before I go to church to lead the resurrection day service as I have done for many years, I make the space to reflect, be in awe, worship, sit in silence and in my mind and soul repeat those famous liturgical words, "Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed".

I can't explain why I believe with so much certainty. Some of it comes from reading the Gospel passages describing the reactions of the first witnesses to the empty tomb and first appearances of Jesus. I believe because I have experienced many interventions in my life like miracles and answers to prayer that are not natural but supernatural. Testimony, personal and corporate, gives you good reason to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day. I give intellectual ascent to the crucifixion and resurrection as one thing, but through meeting the Trinity in different circumstances life has thrown at me to try and stop me believing intellectually, the revelation of the Holy Spirit life encounters goes through my mind to my soul. Simply, you come to believe because you know it in your knower.

This Easter, I encourage you not to just tell the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his rising on the third day from the cul-de-sac of intellectual ascent and discover the Holy Spirit's revelation to the church and whole of humanity - Christ died, Christ is risen! If you have not come to the place of revelatory faith in the Easter story, you may have another challenging Easter to navigate and reconcile unbelief with the testimony of the Christian Church worldwide. For those who have doubt, keep on the journey of discovery my friend.

An analogy of what the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means for me as I journey on. As the story goes, the composers Pyotr Tchaikovsky and George Handel had a conversation after attending worship in heaven, Revelation 4 style. The singing of the angelic host was something both had never imagined possible. They were overwhelmed and forever changed. Both composers were famous for their contribution to Christian music on earth. Handel's "Messiah" with the famous and moving *Hallelujah Chorus*. Tchaikovsky's the "Liturgy of St John Chrysostom" with the famous and moving *Hymn of the Cherubim*. Two different cultures, two languages, two Christian traditions echoing each other in proclaiming the glory of God. Handel asked Tchaikovsky what inspired him to compose the *Hymn of the Cherubim*. The answer came. "I wanted blind people to see the dawn."

I know in my knower that I have seen the dawn in the death and resurrection of Christ, through the testimony of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I look forward to the increasing brightness of the new day when I meet my Saviour and Lord in New Heaven and Earth.

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