

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Mark 16:1-8

April 4, 2021

Full disclosure: I don't really know anything about Jordan Peterson. I'd like to read one of his books someday, but I haven't. Earlier this week I saw an interview with him and Jonathan Pageau, whoever that is. They're discussing C.S. Lewis, and the difference between myths about dying and rising, and the account of Jesus. Peterson sees a narrative world which is outside of our own reality. It made me think not only about ancient myths, but also meaningful worlds that we immerse ourselves in through books and storytelling. Tolkien, for example, constructed a narrative world where forces of good and evil strive for freedom or bondage.

Peterson says that the narrative world gives us our sense of morality: the stories tell us how to act. That narrative world, he says, isn't real, even though we treat it as such. We want a world where there is a sense of meaning and purpose. The alternative to that—and this is me speaking—is Epicureanism: just do what you want, because nothing matters.

Now we're approaching the amazing quote: Sometimes we experience a synchrony, where the narrative and objective world touch. Peterson, who doesn't seem yet a Christian, says that Christ is the ultimate example of the narrative world—where there's meaning and purpose to the universe—that Christ is the ultimate example of the narrative world and the objective world touching, coming together, because Jesus is not a myth, He's an actual historical person, with documented eyewitness testimony. In the interview Peterson almost breaks down in tears, and says the account of Jesus is oddly plausible, but he doesn't know what to make of it, that "it's too terrifying a reality to fully believe. I don't even know what would happen to you if you fully believed it."

That, my friends, is what we come face-to-face with today: the astounding, terrifying, world-changing proposition that the divine narrative of redemption and resurrection is true. And not only morally, or intellectually, or historically true, but true in such a way that my life and death are wrapped up in it; that the totality of your being depends on this story.

What is happening in Jesus? The Narrator—God Himself—the One who made the world entered the world. It was His world, but gone wrong. It became filled with snakes, and death, and tears. He becomes one of us in the womb of a virgin. He does nothing wrong, but is accused of everything. And He suffers everything – every indignity, every humiliation, every pain. Along the way He begins reshaping creation. Storms are quieted, flows of blood cease. He rescues children, sets prostitutes on a new path, flips the tables on religious peddlers. Meeting Him, thieves confess, extortioners make restitution. He gives vision to the blind, He calls a corpse from its tomb.

He comes before corrupt priests and cowardly politicians, and submits to their judgment. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The insurrectionist goes free, and the Lord of Life is executed. Where's the justice in that?

Ah, but here is where the narrative, the grandest narrative of all, meets the objective world, the world as we experience it. Justice is done in Jesus. The curse of the world—the thorns of its corruption—crown His bleeding head. He is king of the curse, the God-man who is God-damned. Justice is done. **“Father, forgive them.”**

And He does. He forgives the world. For the Messiah was pierced for our iniquities, He was raised for our justification.

So St. Paul says, **“Christ is the end of the Law”** (Rom. 10:4). It doesn't mean that Commandments are no more. “Law” is, in Hebrew, “Torah,” the first five books of the Bible. “End” is not “finish,” but “goal” - telos. “The

Messiah is the goal of Torah, the place where the whole story was heading” (N.T. Wright).

The story is not yet finished. You are in it. Christ is the foundation. He makes you part of His story. He incorporates you into His victory over death. Or, to speak more like the New Testament, we are joined to Christ, collectively, as His body. His body is risen from the dead, and His body the church will likewise be raised. At the edge of the grave a Lutheran pastor reads Philippians 3:20–21: **“We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”**

His story changes our story. Our own stories, by themselves, are filled with failure and folly. Beauty fades, strength atrophies. “It’s a bittersweet symphony, this life, trying to make ends meet, you’re a slave to the money then you die.” Our first father could have written that song. He heard from God, “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread until you return to the earth, from dust you are and to dust you shall return.” With anger and greed, vanity and suspicion, we ruin everything.

Every human story ends in a corpse. The entire globe is a mass grave. “The stone is very great” meant the women couldn’t move it - but also, that no one can. The barrier between death and life is immovable. But the story changes in Jesus.

He is risen, and the story of your misdeeds is blotted out.

He is risen, and His story becomes yours.

Jesus is condemned, and Barabbas goes free.

Jesus is judged, and you are acquitted.

Jesus is fallen, and you are raised up.

Jesus is spit upon, and you are wiped clean.

Jesus is mocked, and you are praised.

Jesus is hated, and you are the Father’s beloved.

Jesus is finished, and you are begun.

Jesus is killed, and you are reborn.

Jesus is buried, and you are baptized.

The stone is rolled away, and the door to paradise is opened to you.

Christ is risen, and death is undone.

Christ is risen, and Adam and Eve are lifted up from hell.

Christ is risen, and you shall rise too.

Christ is risen, and the demons are put to flight.

Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice.

So sing and dance, clang the cymbals and blow the trumpet, for Jesus
Christ is risen today, Alleluia!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!