

### WANTED: ALIVE

Today, is the most important day on the Christian calendar. It is Easter Sunday—the day of Jesus’ resurrection!

So, I think it is safe to assume that it was a very important day for Jesus, two thousand years ago.

A resurrection is the thing of lore; a resurrection is a huge event.

A resurrection is not a resuscitation or a restoration.

We’ve read of restorations, such as with Lazarus or the young girl Talitha.

And, we’ve heard of near death experiences – All are a return to life – the continuing of the old.

A resurrection is living beyond death. It is not a return, but rather a progression.

The Bible presents the resurrected body as being in a recognizable form, yet the body is NOT the same.... it is in a “heavenly” state.

Jesus was RESURRECTED, and this was way beyond the comprehensible. So, it stands to reason that fanfare and detailed explanations would be there ready to receive those encountering the risen Jesus, BUT.... this was NOT the case.

Andrew Lloyd Weber’s interpretation of Easter in “Jesus Christ Superstar” makes more sense than what the Gospels tell us.

Flash, spotlights and lots of special effects would be in order for this grand, wonderful and celestial occasion, BUT NO..... that is not what occurred. There wasn’t even a press release to explain what was happening..... Instead, there was confusion and dismay.

Early on Sunday, Mary Magdalene found the tomb of Jesus open and fled to tell the disciples. Peter and John then ran to the tomb. John ran faster, but hesitated to go in. Peter went in, followed by John, and they witnessed the empty tomb. They didn’t understand.

\*They logically assumed that the body was stolen!

The whole scene is a mess: Peter and John were full of despair and confusion. Mary was openly weeping.

Then, they leave her behind and return to the others.

Through her tears, Mary sees two .....Angels in white.... where Jesus body was supposed to be. They don’t add clarity, but instead ask Mary why she is weeping,..... as if ..... ???Mary should know better????

Apparently, Mary hears a noise, and so turns to see a man ... who was likely gently tending to plants in the cemetery.

Still,.....at this point,.... all the survivors believe that Jesus is dead.

The gardener also asks Mary why she is crying..... Jesus asked, “Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?”

\*Why Are You Weeping? Who do you WANT to find?

Mary repeats her assumption about the missing corpse of Jesus, and then..... and then..... SHE hears her name.

The gardener is Jesus.

She has discovered what she was searching for –her heart’s desire.

This realization is all very pleasant and soothing, yet.... strange, too.

It was a touching moment, yet it sure could have been scripted better. Why was Jesus floating around with the plants instead of spreading the news? Did God fail to brief him on what was going to happen?

Was Jesus out of the loop?

Something monumental happened, and some clear explanation would have been appropriate. Jesus had gone away. He was dead as dead can be, and now he was back, and something had changed, was different.

Casual conversation just doesn’t seem to fit here,..... or does it?

Speaking of being away and returning, I haven’t properly addressed my return. So, a little explanation is in order.

Most of you have likely heard about my ordeal. I’ll give a brief overview for those who haven’t heard.

On Monday, March 8 I went to St. Paul’s Hospital in severe pain from a digestive system malfunction. Symptoms and X-rays suggested a intestinal blockage, yet the cause wasn’t seen. So a CAT scan was done.

With clocks stopped and time dancing to a different rhythm and lots of morphine taking the edge off my pain, two doctors approached and announced that they still don’t know what is causing the blockage, but it is happening and a radical operation is needed..... and.... the CAT scan revealed that my left kidney had a 3 cm tumour in it.

*Seeing..... Seeing inside can bring clarity, understanding .....and change.*

Within 24 hours, I was a minus one kidney; my insides were outside in, and 47 titanium staples were keeping my 12 inch incision closed so I wouldn’t spill my guts. I was cancer free, and the prognosis is excellent.

And, all that is the clinical explanation.

As I pondered with the aspects of being lucky and grateful, I moved beyond the doctor language and wondered.... .... at what point do we no longer own our own body, and do we ever have such power?

I entered the hospital with two kidneys, and now they own one of them, and I truly wanted it back. I even asked the surgeon for a picture of it, after all it was mine.... I thought.

I guess that won't happen. Grief comes in different ways, and holding a photograph can assuage the loss, .... just a little, I supposed.

That next day, I had to struggle to merely stand... with the desperate goal of walking. I was attached to lots of wires, hoses and such— draining and giving. I didn't know much, expect that I was tethered.

Life was not the same; even so, I came to appreciate the kindness from compassionate and attentive nurses – Lori, Joanne, Jessica and others.

Waiting and hoping was the flavour of the days.

I was soon informed that the church was efficiently responding. Plans were quickly rearranged and new directives dispatched.

I do give sincere, accolades and thanks to all those who filled in and made adjustments. I was very impressed by how well the church managed,. ..... and..... I was moved to the core, too.

Because, I realized, I understood that I was NOT needed.

**I was not needed.**

About that time, I felt the prayers and the kind gestures reaching out to me, and the new found awareness made me smile. I now understood that I was NOT needed,..... but I was wanted.

So many people in the church connected with me in beautiful ways.

My sister flew out to visit me, and my eldest daughter did the same a few days later. They didn't need to.

At one point, I told Leslie, “ You don't **need** to stay here at the hospital for so many hours. I will be okay.”

Leslie responded, “I know I don't need to be here, But I Want to be here with you.”

There was a time when I thought NEEDS, meeting needs was very important..... Something changed, .... something changed.

On the wall of about every room in the hospital was a crucifix— a cross with a body hanging on it. I suppose they were to remind everyone of the death of Jesus.

I love the Catholics and some of their theology, and a few of my best friends are priests,..... YET.... I can not agree with their emphasis on the dead Jesus.

Something happened between Good Friday and Easter.... things had changed, and.... at least,.... we are challenged to see the change.

The resurrected Jesus didn't clarify or justify his death. The resurrected Jesus never said, "See, I got you covered. I paid it all for you."

No, the risen Christ wandered about as a gardener, responded to Mary's tears and called her by name. The Resurrected Jesus was transformed. He was different, YET the message, the emphasis had not changed.

Before his death, Jesus went about connecting with people at a very real level, at the heart, love level. Jesus lived and taught relationship – justice, peace love and grace.

To be sure, many people came to him seeking to satisfy their base needs.

Over and over, Jesus was asked, "What must I do to be saved? How can I have eternal life? Heal me; fix me." and so on.

And, all along his journey, Jesus invited all to be in a healthy relationship with God and each other, including with enemies.

Most people didn't get it. The disciples didn't even understand.

It seems, all the believers wanted Jesus to meet their needs.

They didn't understand salvation.

True, there are things we need, including a right relationship with God.

We do need Jesus and salvation, just as we need to eat and breathe.

Yet, living in Need is fear based. Need is at a survival level, and God has always prodded us to move beyond being bottom feeders in Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs".

All along, Jesus has encouraged his followers to shift to compassion and love, to be in touch with the heart's true desire, and not be consumed by superficial "needs."

Nevertheless, even today, many people focus on the Dead Jesus, as to suggest that the dead Jesus / killing Jesus / Jesus' death... brings salvation.

Yet, the Resurrection..... says NO to that limited assumption.

The message of salvation is confirmed in the living, risen Christ, and not in the killing of Jesus.

Jesus lives.... , and we are invited to be among the living / to live, and that living is in a new way,....different from the past.

We may need a saviour, BUT Easter invites us to move on / to grow beyond that base need to dwell and thrive in the heart's desire domain – to be in a loving relationship with God, to be agape love as Christ is.

Paul Stookey, of Peter, Paul and Mary, wrote, "Is it love that brings you here or love that brings you life?"

\*Is it love that brings you life?

That is what God did through Jesus, and that is what Jesus presented and lived for us.

Easter morning / the resurrection invites us to understand, to shift from Need to Want, and in this case want means living in our heart's desire.

Want from the heart is NOT lust or a covetous desire. Lust is really a lie that convinces us that we need something we don't need.

At the core of our heart's desire is to love and be loved, all else truly pales in comparison.

In contrast, Living in need is crying out for a dead Jesus, as Mary did.  
It is striving to be saved, out of fear.

In love, in the spirit of the resurrection, we are called by name and invited to experience the love and joy of being in a wonderful relationship with God. We can move beyond our need for salvation.

An example:

We all need to breathe. We need to exchange air; we need oxygen in our lungs.

When we live with fear, with the sense that we can not get another breath, then we gasp for air or hyper-ventilate.

That is NO way to live..... gasping for air.

Have you ever had to grab/ gasp for air?

Then, you know the desperation.

Gasping is no way to live, yet..... bad theology that focuses on the death of Jesus teaches us to gasp for salvation and to gasp for God.

From Easter, we can learn that.... no matter what... God bring Jesus to us. God bring love to us.....

God comes to us.

There is abundance.

We can gently, slowly breathe in the fresh, healing and nurturing air.

We don't need to gasp, anymore.

We can live in wholeness and love, we can live with our heart's desire.....BECAUSE we are wanted.

The critical part of understanding the Good News lesson is discovering that **God wants us.**

God loves you and me.

That is the Easter tilt. We are not in control. We don't have to worry about satisfying our needs or focussing on OUR wants.... because... God wants us! God loves us.

And, God's love is not thwarted by the Romans, or by Pilate and Herod.

God overcame the hostile crowds, and God even overcame the barriers of death by resurrecting Jesus.

As the Apostle Paul noted, "Nothing, no nothing will separate us from the love of God."

God can even overcome our distractions, our lust for control, our fears and our sins.

So, take a long gentle breath. Live with the comfort of knowing that your sins are forgiven by the Grace of God, and that you are loved by God.

Breathe deeply. Life is good and wonderful. Today is Easter.

Jesus lives. Love is alive, and so are you and I.

Breathe it all in slowly and gently.