



# St. Stephen's Traditional Episcopal Church

11856 Mays Chapel Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

Easter Day. being Sunday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## **In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.**

The most extraordinary thing about Jesus' resurrection is not that it happened, but that so many people have trouble believing that it did. Even folks who cheerfully affirm that God created heaven and earth and "all that therein is" often profess to find it hard to believe he physically raised his only begotten Son from the dead.

This is a perfect example of swallowing a camel, while choking on a gnat. Surely it is quite foolish to imagine that God, who effortlessly created our vastly complex universe, would have the faintest bit of trouble resuscitating a dead human being – no matter how maltreated and mutilated. The only thing that should be hard to believe about it is that he would bother to raise such an inconsequential thing as a human body. Compared with the creation, it is a very modest miracle indeed.

But, then, the most striking thing about most of God's miracles is their remarkable modesty. Imagine what the techies in a Hollywood's special effects department could have done with the plagues of Egypt. The River Nile flowing with blood has promise of course. But I can't say the same for plagues of locusts, frogs and flies. Hollywood's scriptwriters would doubtless have plagued Egypt with Zombies, space

aliens or even something retro like the Blob, King Kong or Godzilla.

And why God stop at feeding five thousand? Why didn't he make it 250,000 or even two and a half 2.5 million? God could just as easily have fed five million as five thousand. What made him think so small? And why didn't he come up with something a tad more glitzy than a tuna salad sandwich

But then the same thing goes for the resurrection: Admit it, the empty tomb bit was real low budget stuff. Couldn't he have sent in the a massive host of angels to duff up the whole kit and caboodle of scribes, Pharisees, Saducees, Roman Soldiers and temple guards. And how about casting Clint Eastwood as the Archangel Michael? He could growl: "Go ahead, make my day." "

All this probably sounds a tad sacrilegious, but the fact of the matter is that, God has always been a bit of a disappointment to human beings. He never takes our advice and he rarely does anything the way we would like him to do it. Our enemies are never crushed and obliterated in quite the way we'd like them to be. We're never vindicated quite as gloriously as we think we ought to be. We must always be content with something rather more modest.

But if the Bible should teach us anything it is that there's nothing new about such feelings of frustration and disappointment. God's people have felt this way from the very beginning of the revelation. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge because they felt they could do a better job at being God than God.

Throughout the accounts of the history of the Children of Israel, we read that they "took to following other Gods." Believe me, they didn't do so because they were satisfied with the one they'd already got. Quite the contrary.

This fundamental human dissatisfaction with the way that God does things was the root cause of the Crucifixion. The Palm Sunday crowd who cheered Jesus into Jerusalem was well aware he was the Messiah, the Anointed One. They knew he had come to bring salvation to them. That's why they greeted him with cheer prescribed by the prophets: "Hosh'ha'nah!" "Save now! "Save now!"

By the end of the week, however, it became clear that they did not like the salvation Jesus was offering. They wanted to smash the Romans militarily and drive them into the sea. They wanted him to conquer the world and set up his Chosen People as the masters of all the nations on earth. Instead of the transient earthly glory they sought, he offered them something infinitely more precious: Eternal life. But they weren't interested. When he declined to do things their way, they killed him . . . in the most painful and humiliating way man has ever devised . . .

If he had been a human king they would have been in very deep trouble. Jesus made that clear in the parable of the wealthy man who rented his vineyard to wicked tenants

who beat up his servants and murdered his son. "When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" Jesus asked. "He will destroy them," he disciples replied, "And rent his vineyard to more grateful people.

A human ruler would mete out punishment to the last jot and tittle. Mercifully, God is in not way like human beings. And far from being disappointed about this fact, we should be thankful for it. But God, being perfectly good, has takes all the evil in the world and ultimately uses it for good. Thus he took the most appalling act of evil that human beings have ever committed and turned it to our benefit. He used our callous murder of his Son to save us from the consequences the crime. Instead of the death we so richly deserve, he offers us the promise of eternal life.

There is, of course, a price to pay for this. But it's not the sort of price human beings would exact -- an arm, a leg, the life of a child, a huge sum of money or an humiliatingly servile acts of gratitude. But all God asks is that we love him, and to demonstrate our love for him by loving our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. A pretty cheap priced, if you ask me.

This, of course, points us to the real miracle of Easter. It isn't the miracle of the physical resurrection of Christ's dead and broken body. The real miracle is what that modest little resurrection miracle represents. It is that: "So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." *AMEN*

***To the Only Wise God, Our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, Both Now and Forever. AMEN.***