

This world holds no power. Mary learned that at the tomb, the first to see and recognize Jesus in his resurrected state, the first apostle to this upside-down kind of God-man. That predawn experience is told again and again in churches all over the world. It is the story that reminds us that **this world holds no power next to God's power.** The good news of the cross is that dying in Christ, we are raised **WITH** Him to new life. Colossians 3: 1-3!
(Have this read.)

We are raised WITH Christ! The Greek word here for “with” is . That is fantastic news! That is resurrection news! It is such good news that we don't take just one day out of the year to celebrate it, we celebrate it every Sunday! Every morning after that first Easter morning was Easter for Mary and for US! Believers set aside fifty days after Easter to celebrate what God has done in our world! Forty days after Easter we remember Jesus ascension into heaven and when he told his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, so that they might become his body in the world. Up to that point, they had pretty much gone back to their familiar world of fishing and life as usual; but that sealed the deal. Easter becomes a way of life, not just a day for candy and bunnies. Shane Claiborne writes: “We practice this every day, not by our

own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit among us as a community!
Jesus' story is now OUR story! And the next chapter starts today!"

Let's look at this scripture today. Mary obeys her Rabbi when he tells her, "Do not hold me. Quick, go tell the rest of the disciples." And she does! "I have SEEN the LORD!" Contemporary Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole writes, "Mary represents the "rebel consciousness" that is essential to Jesus' gospel. Wherever the gospel is preached, we must remember that is good news will make you crazy. Jesus will put you at odds with the economic and political systems of our world. This gospel will force you to act, interrupting the world as it is in ways that make even pious people indignant."

The Kingdom of the cross is so different than the Kingdom of this world. Jesus could have chosen the might of this world, to call down thousands of angels to save him at the last minute, taking him down from that cross and winning the day through the strength of force. This is what we come to describe as power OVER. But Jesus chose, through his death, to become a power "under". If he had chosen the force of violence, he would not have helped anyone love God or love themselves and others as people loved by God. The power of the sword, even if wielded by mighty warring angels, can

never transform a person's inner being. Rather than fighting to WIN, Jesus fights to LOSE by kingdom-of-the-world standards. That's why the world still laughs at this Jesus, who chose the power of radical, self-sacrificial love, allowing himself to be crucified, over the power of the sword. He wins by Kingdom-of-God standards. This is Calvary love, the kind of love that is manifested in the Christ's strong love, not the world's fear. Jesus chooses to redeem, not crush. God's awesome love is put on display when Jesus, instead of clinging to his perfect sinless state, puts himself in the place of sinners. He forgives his tormenters, his murderers. And if you read Luke 23: 34, you see that Jesus asks God to forgive them in their ignorance for "They knew not what they were doing." Radical forgiveness is where resurrection begins!

The story of Corrie ten Boom, whose Dutch family hid many Jews during WWII, is a testament to radical forgiveness. Her family was arrested and sent to several different death camps. Corrie survived. Her father and Betsy did not. Two years after she was released, she was speaking about forgiveness and the love of God. As the crowd was leaving she was stunned to see a man approach her with his hand extended. It was one of the cruelest guards at Ravensbruck. Corrie prayed that God would enable her to forgive him, but her hand stayed by her side. She could not move it to meet his. She

prayed again, and this time, as she shook his hand, a flood of divine love flowed through her arm into his. “I had never known that intense of love before,” she recalled. Sometimes we cannot forgive ourselves, we have to rely on God, like Corrie did.

And God, in love, wanted to reconcile us to Him, to forgive us for our sins, no matter the cost. And so God, through Christ, went to the lowest place so that He could raise us up WITH him, to transform us into the image of the risen Christ! This is not the mindset of the “power over” of the kingdom of this world! IT is the humble character of a servant, who had served the lame, delivered the demonized, befriended the outcasts and the misfits of the world and of the synagogue. THIS is what this upside-down lifestyle looks like.

And as we accept this lifestyle as our own, we become like children, not categorizing who is most important according to power, possessions, money, social respect. We must become like children in order to enter this kingdom. The least is the greatest and greatest is the least in the Kingdom of God! We, like children, are reprogrammed, un-conditioned, to believe that we do not need power, money, and social respect to be great! We become humble and innocent, like a child.

Paul tells us in Romans 12: 2 “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be ye transformed!” This fallen world is taken up with territory- it is

tribal by nature, tit-for-tat, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” ,but Kingdom of GOD people carry the cross, not the sword. The day that I become taken with possessions, or information that elevates me in my power is the day that I choose to be part of the world’s regime, not God’s. When my tongue carries juicy tidbits of gossip instead of humble praise for others, I choose this world, not the upside-down Kingdom of Love.

The risen Christ makes life worth living. This world holds no power! In Christ’s upside-down kingdom, my body will die, but Christ holds the victory over Death!

Greg Boyd, leader of a church in Minnesota and recent teacher at AMBS, describes these two very different kingdoms in his book, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church*. If you want to get a picture of the contrasts between these two kingdoms, read the book. I will simply share one paragraph:

Page 49, last paragraph.

God so loved the people—all people—in the world that he sent his son, Jesus, to reconcile us to himself. Because of all the evil he found here, however, God had to find a way to pay for all this sin and brokenness, all the

selfishness of humanity. Jesus took all of it on himself, took all the sin of all time, including yours, including mine, and suffered and died. It was our apology to God. If you have never accepted this apology as your own, today is the day you can do it. Choose to receive this priceless gift of salvation, through belief in Jesus Christ. It is a profound gift that starts with belief, like John, the beloved disciple, who stooped to see into the new tomb, saw the grave clothes, and realized in that instant that all that his best friend had told him was true. It now made sense: being raised first on the tree, and now being raised from the dead, conquering Death itself. But it was a decision, a moment in time that changed this disciple. It will also change you-- how you operate, out of gratitude and invitation with God in control, not you.

The world holds no power over you! Choose this day to be a Kingdom of God citizen of Love, not fear. Perhaps you are here today and you are hearing this choice clearly for the first time. You have had it with trying to live life by your own power. You have seen the sin that holds you down, that binds you. How you long for the freedom to live by the laws of the Kingdom of Love, the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace. Today could be the day that changes your life forever. This is for children of all ages, not just the young. We have many persuasive voices in the Kingdom of the world. Today God

through the Holy Spirit, is asking, “Will you come with me?” “Will you say, “I have SEEN the Lord!” through the eyes of faith? There are some here that have chosen that way and are on the road already, but some of you are not.

This world of fear and death holds no power. We are here to proclaim, like Mary, “I have seen the Lord!” Amen! So be it this day and every day!

I invite you to close your eyes and think through something with me now. As your eyes are closed, if this is the first time you have heard and understood this new way of life, of depending on Christ to drive your decisions, your dreams, how you operate, then this is the moment that will change your whole life. I also ask, “For those on the Kingdom road, are you ready, this Easter, to recommit your lives to God, to say, “I think, I know I can do better. I have cast my votes with the world too many times, and compromised my identity as a follower of Christ out of fear or apathy, but I want to redirect my heavenly GPS, I want to get back onto the straight and narrow. If this is your desire, please pray silently as I lead you in this prayer:

“Lord Jesus, forgive me. Make me your servant. Make my life an Easter alleluia every day. Transform me for your glory.

Amen!”

We come into this world a lot like caterpillars, crawling slowly through this life, growing into the metamorphosis that life in Christ brings, and in the end, through knowing Him, are raised like butterflies with new heavenly bodies. Death for us is just the cocoon that readies us for the freedom of flight through eternity. This is the message of Easter. Spread it! We are butterfly people! We are hope for the flowers! Amen.

