

“When the sun had risen” (Mk 16:2)

Journalists use the phrase “Man bites dog” to talk about news that’s worth printing. When a dog bites a man, obviously, that’s not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, yes, that’s news! The rest is just “same old, same old”.

Some folks use a similar expression to say nothing is really going on in their life right now. Ask them “What’s up? Anything new?”, and they’ll grimly snap back, “Well, what do you expect? The sun rose in the east this morning.” Behind their grimness often lurks some kind of hopelessness, down in the murky depths of their jaded minds: “Why bother? Why hope? We’re all going to die anyway. The sun will also rise after the day I die.”

And so it could seem at the face of it in the beginning of this morning’s Gospel: “Very early when the sun had risen... the women came to the tomb.” These faithful women had hoped Jesus would save them, but he had been beaten and killed, and now he lay in the grave. Another hope buried, another love dead. They would anoint him with spices and that would be the end of it. Another dream dashed to pieces. The sun had risen on another gloomy day.

Or had it?

What do *you* hear when you hear the words “The sun had risen”?

You can hear it at face value, like a literalist, someone who believes in data and hard facts: “This morning in Jerusalem, the sun rose at 6:28”.

Or you can hear it with the ears of a believer who hopes against all odds, with that other spelling of the word “son”: “This morning, in the quiet of the grave, the son of God and son of man rose from the grave.” You can hear it with poet’s ears: “This morning, He who is the Sun of justice over all history, the dawn from on high, rose from the dead to beam and reign.”

So what do *you* hear, my friend, when I tell you, “the Son has risen”? God leaves you totally free to hear or not and to believe or not that Jesus rose from the dead. Does your heart incline you to cold facts? Or does it warm to the hope that the sun did rise differently this morning, that there is hope, that a new life is possible, where sorrow and suffering and sin finally take a back seat? The Gospel offers us a free hearing test: do we need a hearing aid to pick up on the possibility of the resurrection? Are we so jaded by life’s comforts or concerns that we have lost all hope that another life is possible? Have the winter blizzards hardened us so much that we’ve lost all trust that spring will come?

Yes, many things can keep us from hoping our lives can open up to something deeply new. Yes, suffering can kill our hope: the blows life deals us make us inured to dreams of better days. And comfort too can quash all hope within us: our deepest yearning for a new life gets smothered when we merely rely on endless technological innovations. Rather than yearning

for a fresh outlook on life, we settle for a new phone, a new car, a bigger house, a more distant trip, the latest fashion, the finest food... We can quash our deepest hope by heaping goods over it. Whether we suffer or live like princes, we indeed have many reasons to doubt that life can ever match our deepest desire—to love and to be loved in all freedom.

But I believe Life *can* match our deepest desire. This is today's Good News! I believe that the Sun of Justice rose on Easter morning from the dead. The Son of God is alive and praising his Father in the Spirit. How do we know? Because so many men and women who have gone before us have testified that Jesus' Resurrection is true, and good, and beautiful. The saints of the church, and all of our own believing ancestors, from Ireland and Italy, from Poland and France, from Germany and Portugal... All of them handed on the good news: the Son has risen, alleluia! We are free to accept it or to reject it. But our accepting or rejecting Easter changes how we live and die. We can choose to look at things with the icy eyes of winter and listen to the news with frozen ears, or we can dare to see and hear everyone and everything with the hopeful eyes and ears of budding spring. The signs are there: chirping birds, sweet fragrant flowers, the warm sun, new life... What signs will we choose to heed and trust?

So let me ask you personally: what are you waiting for this morning, my friend? Do you expect "business as usual"? Or do you need something really new? What is it you are waiting for? A new job? A new spouse? A child? Healing? Letting go of fear or hatred? Overcoming an addiction or an obsession? Peace of heart and mind? An end to despair and depression?

It is only once you have identified what you are really waiting for that you can see that God's gift of everlasting life in the risen Son is incredibly greater than the pains or the comforts of your present life. Perhaps what you are waiting for terrifies you. An expecting mother, when the term is near, is torn between the fear of labor and the desire of delivery and new life. The Lord knows you fear change. So he walks ahead of you, quiet, smiling, loving, beaming softly, glowing warmly like the morning sun. "Do not be amazed!... Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified... has been raised. He is not here... He is going before you to Galilee."

Yes, my friend, this is the Good News of this Easter morning. Jesus walks before you on the road of your everyday life, encouraging you, smiling at you. He wishes to give you new eyes, special "Son-glasses", as it were, to let you see him saving you. To let you learn to do what he does: live, and love, and praise, and sing, and thank God the Father that the strife is over, that death has been conquered and that all is now for the best.

The Son/Sun has risen: Alleluia!

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