

The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian kings. Westminster Abbey in London is renowned, because in it rests the bodies of English nobles and notables. Arlington cemetery in Washington, D.C., is revered as the honored resting place of many outstanding Americans. The Garden Tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty!

A time-honored piece of humor says that a couple of weeks after the Resurrection, someone asked Joseph of Arimathea, "Why'd you let them bury Jesus in your brand new tomb?" Joseph shrugged his shoulders and answered, "He only needed it for the weekend!"

From time to time you run into people who challenge us, asking if the resurrection of Jesus can be proved. It can't. Not in the same we prove something in science with a reproducible experiment.

On the other hand, biologists tell us that every five to seven years our bodies almost entirely deteriorate. And yet this process does not destroy us. Millions of our cells die and are almost immediately replaced. In a sense, we have a completely new body every five to seven years. And yet, our personalities go on, we go on. Why should that which happens instantaneously, physical death, do any more to destroy the spirit of a person than that which is occurring every moment that we live? In other words, you can't disprove the resurrection either.

In fact Jesus himself has never wanted it proved. He has always wanted followers, not detectives. And the amazing change that his resurrection brought to the lives of his followers in 33 AD all the way through 2015 has

always been proof to those willing to be touched by him. A respected theologian once said, "The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live."

Listen to an Easter parable. A father was in a foul mood. He wanted to attend the Easter mass with his wife and children. But he was the new manager of a fast-food restaurant. The owner, anticipating a large crowd, ordered him to work Easter Sunday. He had no choice; he needed the manager's job badly. His children required food and clothing. He swallowed his disappointment.

However, the manager had to concede his employer was correct. The people looking for Easter Sunday breakfast were double the usual number. If anything, he could use a few more counter-clerks. He felt guilty getting bad-tempered with several customers. They had grown impatient at the long wait. He sensed too that his anger arose from his envy that they were free to be with their families and he was not.

The young man, who was next in line, politely said to the manager, "Two orders of scrambled eggs please with a double order of bacon and sausage, whole wheat toast, two fresh orange juices, two large coffees." Then he said, "Please put each breakfast on a separate tray, but give me the check for both."

The manager assembled the breakfast order for the pleasant man. He presented the trays to him and said, "\$15.53." The manager was giving the man his change for \$20.

At that point, the fellow, dressed in workingman's clothes, said, "Please give the change and the second tray to the man behind me." Then he disappeared into the large crowd. It was the last he saw of him.

Then the manager saw the man behind his last customer. He was dressed in old clothing, needed a shave, and was carrying what appeared to be his belongings in two shopping bags. He looked exhausted. He looked as though he would be lucky to have the few coins needed for a senior coffee.

The manager gave the surprised man the second heaping tray and the change from the \$20. And he smiled at him; it was the manager's first genuine smile that morning. He whispered that his benefactor was the fellow who had just preceded him. The old man looked confused but delighted. His Easter Sunday had been made. For this beggar, the Christ had indeed risen. The good news was very good. He would have a good breakfast. He was tempted to shout ALLELUIA.

Wasn't this impulsive gesture of the workingman what Easter is really all about? The Christian truck driver was "walking the talk." The manager recalled the line someone had recently spoken to him: "I can't save the world, but I can send a poor man a pizza."

The resurrected Jesus had come to that fast-food shop in the person of the young truck driver. He was driving an eighteen wheeler. He too was away from his family on Easter. The manager realized the driver had touched not only the hungry old man down on his luck but also himself.

When he got home tired that night, his three year old embraced him and shouted, "Daddy, daddy, we saw the Easter Jesus in church." As he picked up the child, he kissed her warmly. Then he whispered to her with a large smile, "I saw Him today too."

As he got down on his knees for his night prayers, he thanked the risen Lord for sending both men into his shop that Easter Sunday. For a fleeting moment, he wondered whether the mysterious truck driver had been the resurrected Jesus Himself. But he dismissed that notion as much too grandiose. But was it?

After all, isn't there a story that Francis of Assisi once had been asked for a coin by a beggar? Francis was coming from Easter services. He embraced the beggar warmly, called him "my brother," and gave him several coins. As Francis left the poor man, he turned back to wave. He saw Jesus Himself standing where the beggar had stood. He waved at Francis with a smile. There was a huge bleeding wound in His hand.

The risen lord has never left us; why should it surprise us to find him in our midst.

A seminary student reached that dread day when he was to give his first practice sermon before his classmates – a terrible audience if ever there was one. He was nervous and afraid, and he stayed up all night, but in the morning, he didn't have a sermon. He stood in the pulpit, looked out at his classmates and said "Do you know what I am going to say?" All of them shook their heads "no" and he said "Neither do I. Go in peace."

The teacher was not happy. "I'll give you another chance tomorrow, and you had better have a sermon."

Again he stayed up all night; and again he couldn't come up with a sermon. Next morning, he stood in the pulpit and asked "Do you know what I am going to say?" The students all nodded their heads "yes." "Then there is no reason to tell you" he said. "Go in peace."

Now the instructor was really angry. "I'll give you one more chance; if you don't have a sermon tomorrow, you will be asked to leave the seminary." Again, no sermon came. He stood in the pulpit the next day and asked "Do you know what I am going to say?" Half of the students nodded "yes" and the other half shook their heads "no." The student preacher then announced "Those who know, tell those who don't know. Go in peace."

The teacher walked over to the student, put his arm over the student's shoulders, and said "Those who know, tell those who don't know. Today, the gospel has been proclaimed." I hope those of you here today know and that you will tell those who don't.

I'll finish with on bit of easter trivia. If you had been living in the Roman Empire in the first century, you would have noticed a strange custom practiced by the Christians. They would go out to their graveyards with laurel wreaths, the wreaths that had been used in Greek and Roman culture to crown the victors of athletic contests. They would take those laurel wreaths and place them on the graves. If you had asked them why, they would say, "Because we believe that in Jesus Christ we have received victory over the power of death."

May those of you who know that tell those who don't.