

The Evangelist

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
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Fear is an emotion with which every human deals from time to time. We know that fear can be debilitating. FDR recognized that when he delivered the famous line to the nation at the outset of WW II: “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” What economic or military power could not do (he was asserting), fear could, stealing motivation, hope, and decisiveness.

“...I am reminded that the Savior of my soul and the author and finisher of my faith had neither internal nor external cause to be afraid.”

TYPES OF FEAR

There are different sorts of fear.

It is rational to be afraid of a tiger that has escaped from the zoo, for instance. This sort of fear is “caused by the belief that something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or is a threat.” This is rational fear.

There is the old-fashioned sort of fear that one might call “reverence.” It’s the recognition that some superior power or person has incredible power and can either harm or help us. This is the fear that puts us on our best behavior. Fear of God belongs in this category. This is reverential fear.

Finally, there is the sort of fear that comes from dread of what is unknown, uncontrollable, or incomprehensible. This sort of fear can be hard to define. Indeed, those who struggle with fear and anxiety on a regular basis are often at a loss when they attempt to define the cause. This is nameless fear.

JESUS AND FEAR

Jesus dealt a great deal with fear in

his ministry. He dealt with fear in others, both regarding physical and spiritual causes (Matthew 8.26, 10.28). Sometimes, he himself caused fear in the hearts of those



around him (Matthew 14.26–27, John 19.8). What I find interesting is that the specific words for fear – ‘*fobeo*’ and ‘*fobos*’ – never apply to him!

This is not because he is

emotionless. Far from it! He felt troubled, anticipating his coming crucifixion (John 13.21). He experienced anger, when he drove the abusive moneychangers out of the Temple (John 2.14–17). He knew personal sorrow, as when Lazarus died (John 11.35). And he was compassionate, as when he was moved by the crowd which was like a flock of sheep “without a shepherd” (Matthew 9.36).

But why not fear? If we go back to the definitions for fear that I gave above, we might understand this better.

- What about rational fear? Remember what Jesus taught his disciples. “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father” (Matthew 10.29). Jesus really believed that! If not one sparrow can die without the Father’s involvement, then surely he could assume that the life of the Father’s only-begotten was carefully under the Father’s scrutiny.
- Reverential fear? Who is superior to the Son? Only The Father! And in the precise terms

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of Trinitarian theology, even the Father is not superior to the Son in His essential nature. The Son is voluntarily subordinate to the Father, even as the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son, all because of the internal fellowship of the three Persons in Divine unity of the Godhead. Besides that, when was the Son of God not on his best behavior?

- And nameless fear? What is not known by the Son? What is beyond his control, or what is there that he cannot comprehend?

Yes, when he sees the devastating effects of the fall, he can be troubled, angry, sad, or compassionate. He even desired a different outcome than the one he knew was coming. “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12.27–28).

But fear? Never!

PRACTICAL THOUGHT

As someone who has dealt with feelings of anxiety for virtually his entire life, I know that this little study cannot automatically take away those debilitating feelings. But as I look at Easter’s approach, I am reminded that the Savior of my soul and the author and finisher of my faith had neither internal nor external cause to be afraid. Furthermore, though his crucifixion and burial appeared to make him powerless, in the resurrection he “was declared to be the Son of God in power” (Romans 1.4). And it’s through the power of the Son of God that I “have received grace” (1.5).

His victory over the most fundamentally incomprehensible, uncontrollable, and unknowable event –

death - probably will not fully relieve those who chronically struggle with anxiety.

But it can do this. It can be a last link in a chain of hopes and comforts that we hang onto at our worst moments. In our better moments, it can be the comforting whisper of a friend speaking into our despair; “he even took this on himself for your sake!” And at our best moments, it can be a battle cry; “Oh death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15.55). As one of the sisters in the congregation often repeats “I know that God has got it.”

We may never lose our fears and anxieties. But we can certainly live increasingly closely in the shadow of the one who never had them to begin with.

*His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*



P. O. Box 192, Southampton, PA 18966
1150 Bristol Road, Churchville, PA 18966
215.396.1970; (Fax) 215.396.9945

email: info@toknowchrist.org
website: www.toknowchrist.org

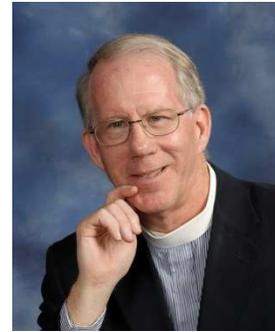
As we proceed toward the end of Lent and approach Easter, I found the idea of reviewing Philip Yancey's The Jesus I Never Knew to be irresistible. Why? It seems to me that almost everyone – inside and outside of churches – has fixed ideas about Jesus. Those of us who attend worship services in a church building are comforted by our ideas concerning Jesus. Those who never make it to church or those who deny the existence of God are often comforted by their conceptions of Jesus as well: “he was just a man” or “he never existed”, and so forth.

However, there is something perplexing about Jesus that just doesn't seem to want to go away. The fact is that the ideas that we have about Jesus often prove to be a source of disappointment for us as well. Why? Perhaps this is so because over the long haul many of us find that our beliefs about Jesus apparently need adjustment. Believers find that Jesus (very much like God) often does not deliver the results we so earnestly desire in the midst of our everyday existence. Nonbelievers, created in the image of God just like you and me, need to know God as much as believers, even if they work hard to ignore Him or to deny His existence; plus, they are often pestered by the close proximity of believers like ourselves. Thus, we go on thinking about Christ, literally being bothered by Him, with a growing sense that we don't really know Him all that well, that at least some of our ideas about Him are inadequate, that there is something more about Jesus that we need to know. Maybe that is a part of our

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hopes each year as Good Friday is followed by Easter (and Pentecost).

Yancey has been mining this territory for a long time. He is the author of Where Is God When It Hurts? (1977), Disappointment with God (1988), What's So Amazing About Grace? (1998) and about 25 other books. Maybe he has had to pursue this quest. His father died of polio when he was one. During his teen years, Yancey lost his Christian faith. Later, he spent most of a decade studying that faith and the One about whom it speaks, Jesus. He says that he tends to write to confront his own doubts. For many years he was the editor-at-large of the bi-monthly magazine, Christianity Today. These days, he lives in Colorado and has managed to climb each of that state's 54 mountains that exceed a height of 14,000 feet.



The Jesus I Never Knew is a literary testimony to the transformation Yancey experienced when he taught a course on the life of Jesus at a church in Chicago. The first chapter is entitled “The Jesus I Thought I knew”. The rest of the book is a careful and provocative reflection upon the details of all four Gospels, from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross and tomb in Jerusalem, the ascension into heaven and the kingdom of God on earth. Along the way, he shatters many of the all-too-popular conceptions of Christ that we likely harbor. I was immediately disturbed by the chapter on the Beatitudes, “Lucky Are the Unlucky”. It was all too obvious, but I had never been able to allow myself to think that way about these “blessings”, let alone to work

through some of the implications of these words for daily life. History is full of accounts of people who grew up in churches, only to one day encounter the good news of Jesus like never before. For many people that has happened more than once. There might be something – or a lot – in this book that you need to know. One way or the other, you are certain to benefit from a reading of The Jesus I Never Knew.

Ken Cook

*Two Ways to Reinvent Jesus:
Sad and Sadder*
By William C. Kenney

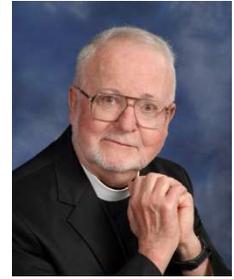
Easter is all about Jesus rising from the dead. Right? Of course! But be aware that many active leaders in a wide variety of churches, who think of themselves as Christians, do not share with you in believing this basic Christian truth.

Instead, they believe that Jesus' powerful influence lived on after his death, continuing in His disciples, who called this influence the Holy Spirit.

By contrast, you believe that Jesus himself, body and soul, returned to life, ate meals with His disciples, and rose body and soul from earth to God's "right hand." From there He sent the Holy Spirit to safeguard us until His eventual return to earth. This, your belief, is the very heart of the "Catholic faith," which means the universal faith of all loyal Christians (regardless of what other false belief their leaders invent).

"Invent" is the key word here. How inventive the undisciplined human mind can become when it shakes off submission to sacred Scripture! For

example, about 18 centuries ago, another "invented" idea circulated among some Church leaders about Jesus rising from the dead. You may not have heard this one, but I draw it to your attention to point out how far "invention" can go in the wrong direction. Here it is: Jesus and Christ were said to be separate beings Jesus was born just Jesus, the man. At His baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, He then became Jesus the Christ, the Divine Son of God, filled with heavenly power. At Jesus' crucifixion the Holy Spirit departed from Him, and the dead human Jesus was no longer



the Divine Christ. Jesus did all the human things including suffering and dying. Christ did all the divine things, like appearing Easter morning and later ascending to God the Father's right hand.

Besides the error of reading and interpreting the life of Jesus in a way that misuses Scripture, this "invented" idea had a cruel consequence. According to this idea, the Christ, the Divine Son of God never suffered, never died, and thus never will share with you or with any of us our bodily and spiritual suffering and death. In your time of trial, when you walk in the valley of the shadow of death, you will walk alone. And while Christ the Divine Son of God, enthroned at His right hand, rules all things to the glory of the Father, neither you nor any of us will ever share bodily and spiritually with Him as adopted sons and daughters.

Again we will walk alone, separated from Him, observers only. Such an "invented" resurrection of

Besides the error of reading and interpreting the life of Jesus in a way that misuses Scripture, this "invented" idea had a cruel consequence.

Jesus is born of despair and breeds in its followers more despair.

Did you know that we have in our hymnal on page 103 a wonderful hymn perfectly designed to yank us by the ears clean out of despair's pit of quicksand.

*He who on the cross did suffer,
He who from the grave arose,
He has vanquished sin & Satan;
He by death has spoiled his foes.
While he lifts his hand in blessing,
He is parted from his friends;
While their eager eyes behold him,
He upon the clouds ascends.*

*Thou hast raised our human nature
On the clouds to God's right hand;
There we sit in heav'nly places,
There with thee in glory stand.
Jesus reigns, adored by angels;
Man with God is on the throne;
Mighty Lord, in thine ascension,
We by faith behold our own.
(vs. 2-3)*

A wonderful hymn perfectly designed to yank us by the ears clean out of despair's pit of quicksand.

Our fellow human beings, near and far, will all have to face their own end, even those folks who are determined not to talk about it. Compared to the faith you have in the real resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, the alternatives to that supreme truth are so weak, so cold, and so empty!

May you enjoy with gratitude this Feast Day of the Resurrection. May you extend your heart and voice warmly and simply to anyone you meet who seems ready and willing and needing to hear your good news that Christ is Risen! He is risen, indeed!

Bill



Wood Duck
Courtesy of William Keene

Faith in Action Initiative Update By Lisa Gentles

Thanks to our knitting and crocheting ministry for their fine work. Five knit hats and scarves were sent to children at Logan Hope.

Our next Service Day will be a "Spring Cleaning Day" at Christ's Home in Warminster on May 19th. More details to follow.

If anyone is interested in visiting shut-ins and didn't already fill out an FIAI form, please contact me. I am trying to match up "visitors" with "visitees" "and there are varieties of ideas working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one."

Lisa

Birthdays in the Month of April:



10th – Abigail Tolbert
19th – Lynn Rudolph

Turn to page 6 for Upcoming Events



April	
5 th	Maundy Thursday
6 th	Good Friday
7 th	Easter Egg Hunt
8 th	Easter Sunday
20 th	The Evangelist Articles Due
27 th	Bowling Night
28 th	Women's Retreat Day

May	
6 th	Mission Sunday
19 th	Faith In Action Service Date

Please be sure to read "What's the Buzz" in the coming weeks for more details.