

“Glow in the Dark Saints”

1 Corinthians 15:3-6, 20-26

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On Good Friday, the day of Jesus’s crucifixion, the land was dark the Gospels tell us, during the day, from noon well into the afternoon. The darkness of the world pictured the darkness of sin, which casts its long shadow even upon us today. The world is dark, troubled, broken, simply, not the way it’s supposed to be in war and poverty injustice, sin and disease. Within we face doubts of the presence of goodness in the world, and even in our own hearts. The world seems covered with darkness as it was on that Good Friday.

But we don’t remain at Good Friday. For we are an Easter People living in a Good Friday world. We are a Resurrection people thrust into a world of darkness and suffering. How?

1 Corinthians 15:3–6, 20-26

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

My son, Isaiah used to have this terrific set of Batman pajamas. The shirt is this deep battleship gray color with a menacing Batman screened onto the front in a yellow/green color. When you look at it, noticing the details of Batman on the dark shirt is difficult, hard to make out. But when you turn out the lights, whoa, does Batman pop, especially if you’ve been in the sunlight.

His Batman is a glow-in-the-dark Batman. The color of the ink forming Batman on the shirt absorbs light, and in the dark, Batman, the Dark Knight, glows all the brighter.

What the Apostle Paul wrote to us in 1 Corinthians 15 is that as Christians, we are a glow-in-the-dark kind of people. We are people made saints in the eyes of God by what Jesus has done for us on the cross and by the Resurrection. In a world seemingly covered up in darkness, his life within us shines forth the promise of more light coming, more life coming as the domination of the power of darkness was broken by Jesus’s resurrection.

The call for us today is to live as Glow in the Dark Saints, to live as a presence now of the light that will fully come then. Through God’s people the world may experience a bit of the life of Jesus.

As you can tell, there are lots of things happening in an Easter service so we don't have much time. But just two quick implications, to quick facets of being a Glow in the Dark Saint from this text.

1. The Resurrection shines light into the darkness in our lives.

When you or I take an honest look at our lives, what do we see? Each of us have things about our lives that we know do not measure up to what is right. We have a sense within our conscience of aspects of our lives that we try and keep hidden yet bring harm to others, especially those closest to us.

The way that God designed the world, it works best when we live not for ourselves but for God and others. If we know ourselves fairly well, then we know quite often instead we live to serve self and use other people, and sometimes God, to pursue what we want. Instead of living according to the standard of what is right and best according to the Creator, we take matters into our own hands and attempt to decide for ourselves what is best and right. In the meantime, people get hurt; we are hurt by this too. The Bible calls this sin.

This sin is rebellion against our Creator, seeking to decide for self what is good and right. Martin Luther said about 500 years ago that sin is *homo incurvatus in se*, humanity curved in on itself, our interests curved in on themselves so that our lives and the world gets twisted. You see while we may want to point the finger away from self for all the destruction and death and pain in the world, the reality is that the blame lies with each of us. The consequence of that living for self is a world that falls apart, comes apart at the fray, where we hurt and harm one another, and ultimately the result is death, as judgment and alienation from our Creator God. We bring the darkness onto ourselves.

The resurrection of Jesus proclaims that it doesn't have to remain that way. V. 3-4 say that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,** **4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.** When he says Christ died for our sins, he died as a substitute. He was joined to us, stood in our place, taking on himself upon the cross the consequences and judgment of OUR sin. We racked up a guilt debt of sin and death, and Jesus died to pay it off. He went to death in judgment for our darkness and sin.

But the resurrection of Jesus is the verification, the validation, that the debt is paid and we can be made new. Jesus went to his death because of our debt, BUT he came out alive in powerful demonstration that the debt is paid. That is what he means in v. 17, **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.** V. 20, **But in fact Christ has been raised.** Since Christ was raised we no longer stand condemned for our sins. The resurrection proves his payment of his life on the cross was sufficient payment for our debt; the light of his life has shone into our darkness. Our lives no longer have to be dominated by the darkness of our sin, but instead, we can glow in the dark with his love and forgiveness.

Think about when you enter a parking garage and push the button at the barricade and out spits your ticket. If you take that ticket into some stores and buy something, they will validate your ticket, stamp it saying that sufficient payment has been received. When you get back out to the booth on the way out, all you do is show the validated ticket and you are let out.

The same is true of the resurrection of Jesus. The proof that God accepted Jesus's death on the cross as sufficient payment of our sin debt was the resurrection. His resurrection, taking off the grave clothes and walking out of the tomb alive, is validation that our sins are removed and we are made new in his life. Power of sin is broken; the judgment over. The verdict has been delivered. Out of love Jesus served the death sentence in our place. There is now no longer any condemnation if you trust in Jesus.

If you are struggling this morning feeling caught in the dark, under a deep sense of guilt or the weight of shame, fearing condemnation for your sin, then in your mind's eye rush to the door of the tomb and find it empty. Jesus was raised from the dead to certify, validate that his payment for our sins is sufficient if we believe. You can be made new to shine and glow in the dark with his life and light now. Do you believe?

2. The Resurrection shines light into the darkness in this world.

Not only does the resurrection make us new, but also through Jesus the world is being made new, too. How?

Again, the resurrection. He calls it the "firstfruits" in v. 20 and 23. Firstfruits are what farmers look to in their crops as the very first inkling of the harvest. If the first fruits, the earliest crops are good, then that promises a full and good harvest. If they are bad, then the whole harvest will be bad. The first fruits are the indicator of what kind of harvest will come. Jesus's resurrection is the first fruits, telling us what will come in the future. It is like a foretaste of the certain future that is coming.

See Paul is telling us that there is another world, an eternal world that is one of complete justice and love, a world where people don't get sick and die, where the old aren't discarded, where life is filled with relationships in complete harmony.

But there is a giant wall between this world of darkness and that world of light. We can only imagine a world like the eternal one. Jesus's resurrection was a breaking into this world what is to come in that one. His resurrection is a promise, a first fruit of that new one. Jesus's resurrection proves God is faithful to his promises. All those years ago, God promised back in Genesis 3:15, that he would crush evil. And he has done it in resurrection, beginning that work of making all things new again.

When Jesus was raised, it was like he punched a hole into that world, or as one of my favorite musicians—Bono—said, ripped a corner off the darkness, so that the light of that world shines into the decay of this one. His resurrection proves that this coming future of God to make this world come unbroken has landed; the reign of death and disease has been defeated and will be no more when he returns again. Every taste of darkness, the rulers, and powers of despair and oppression, the reign of death will be placed under his feet one day soon, v. 25-26.

So as glow in the dark people made new by Jesus's resurrection, we live like it now! We don't have to be afraid of death any longer and therefore we can start living NOW. We can begin to say to the sufferer that the end of all suffering is coming, so fight for life NOW. We can say to the sick, that healing is coming, so fight for life now. We can say to the hungry, to the poor, to the ones trapped in addiction or refusal to forgive one another, his life is available now, so fight...and PROMISE one day soon all this darkness and despair will come to a screeching halt. None of it will survive. Live like a glow in the dark saint in a world of dark today. Hang on in confidence because the light is coming.

It is a Good Friday world now, but we are an Easter people. The light and life of Jesus will make you new again. Will you trust him as your only hope? And he will deploy you and me as his glow in the dark people, a people of promise of all things new into the world around you. Will you go?