

Don't Be Afraid of the LIGHT!  
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Easter Sunday

(Luke 24:1-12 NRSV) But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. {2} They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, {3} but when they went in, they did not find the body. {4} While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. {5} The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. {6} Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, {7} that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." {8} Then they remembered his words, {9} and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. {10} Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. {11} But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. {12} But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

We all know the Easter story:

Jesus comes to Jerusalem

They have a parade — we call it "Palm Sunday"

He enters the temple area and gets upset with the merchants taking advantage of the poor people — so he in turns trashes their booths

The religious leaders get mad at him and seek to kill him

He gathers with his friends in the city to celebrate the Passover

One of his friends betrays him

After being taken before a kangaroo court Jesus is beaten, tortured and eventually murdered — forced to die on a horrible death upon a cross

The Disciples all flee

But that is not the end of the story is it?

That is where we ended on Friday

Darkness seemed to come into the world

Some even believed that EVIL had won

The LIGHT had been extinguished

— just like it was on Friday night, as we watched Michelle and Haley extinguish the candles

## DARKNESS SEEMED TO REIGN!

Last September, I came across a fascinating article in *Fast Company* magazine. The title of the article appeared to be a joke: How Many Light Bulbs Does It Take To Change The World?

Remember all the light bulb jokes.

How many Irish men does it take to change a light bulb?

5 — one to hold the lightbulb, four to turn the ladder around

How many psychiatrists does it take to change a lightbulb ?

Only one, but the lightbulb must want to change.

How many journalists does it take to change a light bulb?

Three. One to report it as an inspired government program to bring light to the people, one to report it as a diabolical government plot to deprive the poor of darkness, and one to win a Pulitzer prize for reporting that Electric Company hired a lightbulb assassin to break the bulb in the first place.

How many environmentalists does it take to change a light bulb?

11 — one to change the lightbulb, ten to hold a protest about how to dispose of the old one

How many Methodists does it take to change a light bulb?

11 — one to change the lightbulb, ten to hold a meeting to direct the one on how to change the lightbulb

How many atheists does it take to change a light bulb?

None. Atheists question whether it's really light anyway.

The point of the article was that we have at our disposal a lightbulb that can change the world.

We've all seen them — maybe we even have a few in our house.

And believe it or not, we have been converting the church over to these light bulbs, for the last year or so.

When they first came out, it seemed like hotels were the first to jump on the bandwagon and the light that they produced was horrible — dull and dingy, slow to turn on.

The ones today however, are totally different.

I am talking about, of course, Compact Florescent Light Bulbs

These new bulbs come on quickly with bright, steady, quiet light that rivals your regular incandescent bulb yet uses 75-80 percent less electricity to operate and generates 200 degrees less surface heat than the traditional bulb, making it easier to change quickly — which isn't really a big deal since you'll only have to do that about once every 10 years instead of every three to four months.

Why change to these bulbs? Because the potential impact of using them is staggering.

If every one of the 100 million homes in America swapped out just one incandescent with a swirl, the energy saved would eliminate the equivalent pollution of 1.3 million cars on the road, save enough electricity to power a city of 1.5 million people, or close two power plants.

If that's not mind-blowing enough, consider this: The typical American home has between 50 and 100 light bulb sockets (go ahead, go home and count 'em!). What would the impact be if every home installed five swirls, 10 — 50?

Chuck Kerby, Wal-Mart's vice president for hardware and paint, decided to test the swirl's efficiency by replacing all the lights in ceiling fan displays with them — that's 40 bulbs per store in 3,230 stores. The savings? A projected \$6 million a year in electric bills. "I couldn't believe it," says Kerby, "I didn't know I was paying \$6 million to light those fixtures. I said that can't be right, go back and do the math again." But the numbers came out the same. "That, for me, was an 'I got it' moment."

And so why aren't we all running out and buying them?

Price has kept some of us away — since the bulbs cost about three times as much as the traditional bulb.

But maybe the biggest factor is just getting us to change our old perceptions and try something new. And as many of us know, that is never easy!

This one item has the potential to radically change the world - to help in a simple way with the problem of global warming which threatens our planet.

Who would have thought that a simple change in lighting could change the world?

Let's rewind back fifteen weeks. Do you remember what you were doing?

We gathered together in this very place, holding back the darkness with a candle, a candle that symbolized to us Jesus.

(John 1:1-14 NRSV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being {4} in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. {5} The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. {6} There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. {8} He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. {9} The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. {10} He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. {11} He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. {12} But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, {13} who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. {14} And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

The light came into the world, and brings hope and joy — but the world did not see the light.

When the religious leaders saw the light of Jesus, they were frightened by it, he did not fit their expectations — so they turned off the light — they extinguished the light.

The darkness seemed overwhelming on Friday, as Jesus hung from the cross — and the darkness continued as they locked his dead body in a tomb — keeping the light out by sealing it with a huge stone.

It was still dark when Mary Magdalene and the others came to the tomb.

When the others left, Mary was alone until she was confronted with the message of angels and the strange figure of a gardener, each asking her in turn, “Why are you weeping?” Through her tears she could not have imagined that the gardener was the risen Jesus — transformed so as not to be immediately recognized by his human shape, but known by the power and light that burned within. “Do not hold on to me” was Jesus’ response to her embrace of joy. His body of death had been transformed, which was great

news that needed to be shared.

The old way of life was done for Jesus and it was time to declare a new one to his followers — and through them, to the rest of the world.

What they came to understand was that the light had not been extinguished, just transformed — and it was a light that would change everything.

As we gather together today, most of us come looking to understand the Easter Story and we usually hear about it in one of two ways.

First there is the: “Because Jesus died, and rose from the dead and is now in heaven, we too can get to heaven when we die.”

Heaven — — us (you and I) getting to heaven is thus the purpose of Easter.

Or, we tend to see Easter as a metaphor for new life. After all, modern science knows full well that bodies generally stay dead so it’s not the disposition of the body in the tomb but the idea of Jesus being alive in spirit that really matters.

Unfortunately, the problem with both of these ways of seeing Easter is that they have a tendency to quickly burn out once the chocolate bunnies are consumed.

If the resurrection is simply about knowing there’s a life after death or just feeling good about Jesus and spiritual things in general, it doesn’t illuminate much about our present lives.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul wrote his great understanding of Easter. Paul tells us that the resurrection of Jesus is the moment when God began to replace the old, long standing design of death with a new prototype — a new way of living that he calls “first fruits.”

And what does Paul mean by that?

That our lives — right now — are shaped by the illuminating life of Jesus.

When you read the gospels carefully and critically, one of the things that should startle you is that when Jesus speaks of the “Kingdom of God,” he was not referring to what we commonly call “heaven”, instead he was talking about a new world — reborn in the light of God through Jesus.

The “Kingdom” is a place where there is no darkness.

A place of justice and love and hope.

And God does not want us to sit around and wait for that time when Jesus will return, NO, God wants us through Jesus to help usher in that Kingdom of Light and Love.

In other words — it is time for us to get rid of those old incandescent bulbs and replace them with the love of Christ. So that through our very lives, the light of God can shine through.

Easter matters because it is God's announcement that there is, indeed, a solution to the world's rampant over-consumption of sin and self. One life, redeemed from death, can save the world. As God's people, we can begin working that solution right now by making earth look a bit more like heaven every day.

Imagine if every one of us plugged that reshaped life into our homes, our workplaces and everywhere else where the old shape still dominates the market.

How many inner cities would be lit with the light of love instead of despair?  
How would our economic focus shift from consumption to generosity?  
What light would be shed on the issues that divide humanity?

It only takes one light bulb to save the world.  
And that's nothing compared to a risen Lord!