

April Fools - is the joke on you?

Acts 10³⁴⁻⁴³; Psalm 118; 1 Corinthians 15¹⁻¹¹; John 20¹⁻¹⁸

Then the disciples returned to their homes. (John 20¹⁰)

Last year for April fools Day there were a number of pranks, including:

- ✦ Urban Camouflage for the army so that they blend in with bricks
- ✦ The Royal Mint to launch a new 99p coin
- ✦ That the UK would withdraw from the Eurovision Song Contest
- ✦ That the England Rugby team were practicing with ostrich eggs to improve their ball handling skills
- ✦ A hot-tub Bird table

Or my favourite:

- ✦ Funeralbooker, the online funeral price-comparison service, who've just sent us this press release for the 'UK's first home cremation service.' "The innovative new DIY cremation service aims to set the funeral industry alight," they say, (and yes, we see what they did there), "by allowing families to bid loved ones a warm farewell from the comfort of their own home." For £299.99, so they say, you can hire this 'domicinerator', and burn the remains of your recently deceased loved one from the comfort of your own back garden.

I am not sure how old the April Fool tradition goes back - it is certainly mentioned in Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales in 1392, but is probably older, but probably not around in 1st century Palestine. But how much the events surrounding the resurrection must have felt like it, a one in very poor taste to those who were grieving = to begin with at any rate.

Yet, the truth of the resurrection as an historical fact is most obviously demonstrated in the way in which the Gospels record the way in which the responses to the event are so different and so obviously human - not unlike the variety of responses to April fool jokes.

If the Gospels were a text constructed to promote Christianity the principal characters would be more obviously inclined to spiritual greatness and to an immediate celebration of faith.

- ✦ Mary Magdalene went to the tomb - closeness to Jesus' body would have been a natural desire for someone so close to Jesus in life. It is also natural that she ran for help - with the religious authorities and the civic authorities both so involved in Jesus death she had good cause to be hesitant.
- ✦ The people to who she went for help were John and Peter. The competition between them is well established and that is expressed in how they get to the tomb - John first but cautious outrunning Peter who impulsively barges in. They begin by believing in the empty tomb - and go home.
- ✦ Mary is slow to recognise the Gardner as Jesus - she really wasn't expecting to see him. Can you imagine how she would have communicated to the disciples **I have seen the Lord!** It probably was fairly enthusiastic.

If you were making this up these key figures would look better and respond more effulgently than the Gospel record portrays. As it is, it is their fear and then their dullness that is clear.

We know that this isn't a prank because 10 of the 11 disciples end up becoming martyrs because of their conviction in the resurrection of Jesus and the need to respond to him in faith. One person might accidentally martyr themselves for a joke, but not 10.

To those who don't accept this I only have one thing to say - the joke is on you!

**Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**