

Beyond the Easter Bunny

I don't like the Easter Bunny. I don't mind Santa Claus. The idea of an old kind guy with a big bag of toys for good girls and boys flying around in a reindeer-powered sleigh captures my imagination. But the Easter Bunny is just a bit too much for me. A rabbit hauling around a bunch of baskets of colored eggs and candy is incomprehensibly outlandish. And he's a late-comer, too. No one ever heard of the Easter Bunny before the 17th century. At least Santa has a historical basis –however thin- in the 4th century St Nicholas.

But the main reason I don't care for the Easter Bunny is that he -or she- along with the basket of eggs is a symbol of fertility and the springtime renewal of life. As a mascot for the cycle of nature and the natural process of death and life he -or she- may have a place. But this has nothing to do with Easter. Easter is certainly not about natural cycles. In fact it is about the breaking of a very important cycle. As such, it is a unique and world changing event.

The buds and flowers and sprigs of grass that reach out of the apparently dead earth in the Spring is predictable. It happens more or less on schedule –except in places like South Florida where there are no apparent seasons. But in most places it happens every year. This seasonal new life is reason for celebration but it is not an occasion for utter surprise and wonder.

What happened on Easter was not natural and inevitable. There was no seed of life in the dead body that was tucked in the stone tomb. The crucified corpse contained no potential for vitality. The resurrection of Jesus took place for one reason: the death crushing power of God. Only because God acted in a way that was out of the ordinary did the crucified Jesus show himself as the risen Christ.

What took place on Easter morning had nothing to do with Spring flowers or butterflies or hatching eggs or prolific bunnies. The resurrection is about the incalculable action of God who vindicated Jesus who was faithful unto death, showing us that he is worth to be called Lord and to be followed wherever he leads.

But all this doesn't mean that I locked the Easter Bunny out of our house when I had little kids. They wouldn't have appreciated that action, however theologically sound it might be. They found colorful baskets of decorated eggs and candy when they got out of bed on Easter morning. But I encouraged them to look beyond the bunny and the delightful things he or she was supposed to have brought to see Jesus and the wonder of his conquest of the grave.