

Dear Friends,

We begin with a riddle.

What is:

- Greater than God,
- Worse than the devil,
- The poor have it,
- The rich want for it,
- And if you eat it you die?

Many people are afraid of death. It may involve suffering and pain; it means being separated from the people and the life we love and, maybe, we imagine it as not existing - a kind of nothingness - which we don't even want to begin to think about.



*Richard Bavin - The Empty Tomb from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP, used with permission.
www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection*

For the Christian, to feel that God is not with us is a kind of death. Many of us have that experience from time to time, regardless of the strength of our faith. We feel numb; we believe we are completely alone and we think that there is nothing that we, or anyone else, can do about it. We are not alone in this experience. Jesus' heartfelt cry of dereliction (it means being abandoned/neglected) on the cross was 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 13:34). Almost immediately, he died.

The death of Jesus has universal implications. Death is real, but death is not nothingness, death does not have the last word and death is not the end.

The Easter message is about resurrection, good defeating evil, God defeating the devil, life before death and life after death. Resurrection does away with separation and nothingness and is God's answer to our very real, but always temporary, experiences of desolation. They have to be lived through, but they do have an end where there is a greater and more glorious future awaiting us. Unusually, the picture above depicts the view from inside the tomb, somewhere we have never been. How do you react to it? I love it. There is something so hopeful about the bright light shining in and the well light steps that seems to indicate the hope of emerging, after a short climb, into a new dawn. Resurrection was not just for Jesus, but is for all people, to be experienced in part in this life, and fully and completely in the next.

And the answer to the riddle? It is the same as the triumphant answer to the question: 'What was in the tomb on the first Easter morning?': Nothing!

Caroline

