

Easter revolution: "God has put something very right"

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [April 5, 2003](#) issue

Resurrection has always been a novel, revolutionary doctrine," N. T. Wright reminds us. His article on the resurrection (p. 32) is must reading, particularly for those who must stand up in a pulpit and make some kind of sense of it all.

In some ways, the preacher loves Easter Sunday—the wonderful music, the gorgeous flowers, all those people crowding the pews. And we can't entirely suppress the idea that these people must have come to church to hear us. At the same time, we may suspect that the people are there for trivial reasons—to have a place to go before Easter brunch.

I've come to think the latter suspicion is mostly wrong. People come to church on Easter because they know what the topic is. A member of my congregation who died of AIDS a few years ago used to call it "the big one": the reality of death and the power of death—and the power that triumphs over death.

With the U.S. moving militarily against Iraq, and the suicide bombings and military responses in Israel-Palestine spinning out of control, the reality of death is pretty unavoidable this year. Hopes for peace have been dashed, much the way Jesus' death appeared to bring to a crushing conclusion his friends' hope that God's kingdom had actually come, that love would prove better than hate and life more powerful than death.

I love the way the Gospels portray resistance to the idea of resurrection on the part of virtually all the first witnesses. Eugene Peterson observes that "participation in resurrection cannot be forced or engineered." It is only gradually, as they are confronted at a deeply personal and intimate level by the reality of resurrection, that they believe. Mary in the garden, the disciples hiding behind a locked door, the skeptical Thomas—at some point they "gave their hearts" (the best translation of credo) to God's revolution.

People come to church on Easter not to hear an analysis of texts, but to be reminded that there is no tragedy that God cannot redeem, no loss that the Risen Christ cannot overcome, no dream—even the elusive dream of peace on earth—that the God who raised Jesus from the dead cannot energize and advance.

As my colleague Joanna Adams put it recently, “In a world where everything seems to be going wrong, God has put something very right.”