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EASTER DAY

“You cannot bomb an ideology.” – Julia Denny-Dimitriou

This was a comment in an article about ISIS in *Time* magazine some time ago. It has stayed with me because I think it is an eternal principle, which holds true in so many different contexts.

It has been proved right in relation to *daesh* because even though some want to think that the organisation and its ideology are “defeated”, at least in the Middle East, it has reappeared and is a growing scourge in Africa (www.aljazeera.com 28 Nov 2019).

You cannot destroy an ideology with physical violence or brute force perpetrated against the people who hold to it. Neither can you bully it into submission, although regimes throughout history have tried this e.g. Russia and China at the height of Communism, when Christianity responded by going “underground”.

Long before them, the Roman Empire tried it too, simply eliminating opponents at will, swiftly and efficiently.

However, when it came to the Galilean agitator, Jesus of Nazareth, they went to extraordinary lengths to brutally degrade and execute him: “A time-consuming, expensive trial, flogging, mocking, marching off to Golgotha, stripping naked, nailing to a cross, more mocking and taunting, poking with a spear to make sure he's really dead.” (Hermanson, [A Covenant Of Compassion](#))

Why? Why the dramatic, highly staged death for Jesus?

Because they wanted to kill more than just the man.

They wanted to kill what Jesus stood for, along with any thought that his followers might have of continuing his work. They wanted to make sure there was no future and no hope of his teaching, his legacy, continuing. The sign posted to his cross was the Roman Empire's equivalent of a Viking head on a pike or a Mafia finger sent through the mail: “Look what we did to your hero. Imagine what we'll do to you.”

And yet, such was the power of his ideology, that Joseph of Arimathea, at enormous risk, elicited a personal favour from Pontius Pilate to retrieve Jesus' body and give it a proper burial in a tomb.

That is where we find ourselves today, in company with the two Marys.

And, just as first his birth, then his life and finally his death were marked by extraordinary occurrences, strange things happen: An earthquake and a stone too heavy for one man to move is rolled away by an angel.

The angel rolls the stone back (v. 2), not to let Jesus out, but to let the women in, because the resurrection is already history: It has already taken place. There were no human witnesses to the actual resurrection, but these two women who witnessed Jesus' death and burial now witness the fact that, despite Rome's best efforts, Jesus is gone. The angel assures them that Jesus has been raised as he had predicted.

“You cannot bomb an ideology.”

And even more, you cannot win against the Creator and Author of all.
The Roman Empire had not reckoned with coming up against the God of Israel.

The very worst that Rome could do was not able to kill Jesus' words and deeds.
They are true and trustworthy.

That is good news indeed, which we celebrate today. Perhaps even more welcome than under “normal” circumstances: The One in whom we believe, whose death and resurrection we remember; he is indeed worthy of our trust, our love, our worship.

We can be reassured that Covid-19 cannot – and will not – kill God. It cannot kill Jesus and it will not kill the Church nor the “ideology” on which it is founded.

This is the really, very Good News of Easter.

Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed!
Hallelujah.

References: Holytextures.com: Rev'd Dr George Hermanson; Sermonwriter.com; workingpreacher.com: Paul S. Berge; Laughingbird.net: Nathan Nettleton

less stated, all liturgy from *A Prayer Book for Australia*