

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

Happy April Fools' Day

By Ken Woodley

What fools we all are. All of us fell for the oldest April Fools joke on earth:

Easter.

And, as if to rub it in, Easter is actually on April Fools' Day this year. Perfect.

“Mary Magdalene found an empty tomb! Jesus has risen from the dead! He spoke to her!”

Sure. Happy April Fools' Day. And it's all just part of the most extravagant April Fools joke in the history of the world.

All that stuff Jesus taught: we should love each other, God is love, God loves us unconditionally.

What an April Fools' Day joke that is.

I mean, really, who loves anybody unconditionally? Better check the New Testament, because there's bound to be a prenuptial agreement in there somewhere with lots of conditions.

Well, actually ....

I did check the New Testament and there's not a pre-nup in sight. So, you know what? If I'm going to be a fool for anyone—on April 1st or any day—it's going to be for Jesus and what he taught us about God and love. A love that resurrects.

I believe that Mary Magdalene did see Jesus on Easter morning. If she'd been making it up, Mary would have said that she instantly recognized Jesus. But Mary told everyone that she first thought he was the gardener. That detail is compelling evidence. Her momentary confusion invites skeptics to say, “Hey, if it was really Jesus wouldn't she have recognized him immediately?” For me, Mary's admission rings with truth.

And I believe the disciples encountered Jesus in that upstairs room where they were hiding. For me, it's the only possible explanation for their immediate U-turn from paralyzing fear after the crucifixion into taking the truth of Jesus' resurrection out into the streets, even if it killed them. And it did eventually kill just about all of them.

So, something mind-blowing really did happen after the crucifixion. Of that, I am certain.

Do I believe every detail and story in the Bible? No. I was a journalist for 36 years and I know reporters can make factual mistakes. Even in same-day coverage, much less writing about something decades—or centuries—after it happened.

And that's okay because the essential truth shines through when it comes to Jesus and his message of resurrecting love. It's like stained-glass windows. They are broken pieces of glass but the light still tells their story.

I believe that Jesus did die for us. He could have run away from his certain date with crucifixion anytime he wanted to. He could have gone off with Mary Magdalene, married, had kids and been a happy carpenter.

But Jesus believed what God had told him as he grew into his messiahship while a young man before fully embracing that mission as a 30-year old.

And so he preached love until they nailed him to a cross. Fulfilling that mission was the only way he could reach us. Had he run away, he would have been swallowed by anonymity, along with his message.

But he died and he rose, as, I believe, all of us shall.

I've experienced the presence of the resurrected Jesus in my own life more than once. And I wonder ... perhaps he really is a gardener after all, because I've felt unexpected petals unaccountably bloom inside me where I'd thought there were only weeds.

I don't have to understand everything about Jesus. I can't connect all of the dots. I don't even know where all of the dots are. Organized Christianity doesn't either. But how could any apostle's creed truly capture and domesticate such wild and infinite love? And it is that love and light and grace that I am quite certain of.

So, happy Easter. There's not an April Fools' Day joke in sight.

