

Pastor John Medwid's April Newsletter Article Stephen Hawking and Resurrection

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christ is risen!

As I write this column, Stephen Hawking has recently died. What an incredible life! What an incredible person! Stephen was born on January 8, 1942 in Oxford, England. In 1963, he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) also known as Lou Gehrig's disease and given two years to live. Fortunately, the disease progressed slowly. Stephen's condition deteriorated over the years until he was wheelchair-bound and only able to communicate with a device that he controlled through the movements of a single cheek muscle! In spite of his physical limitations, Stephen was a brilliant theoretical physicist and cosmologist whose work rivaled that of Einstein himself. His life stands as a testament to the indomitable power of the human spirit that can overcome immense obstacles. There is something inherent in life that refuses to give up and which contains a desire to push forward beyond the known frontiers in order to blaze a new trail and to leave a lasting legacy for the betterment of all.

I am thinking of Stephen Hawking as we hear again the Easter proclamation of new life! Among all of the gospel accounts of the resurrection, I like Mark's account the best! Mark is the first canonical gospel to be written in the 70's CE. After that comes Matthew (80's CE), Luke (90's CE), and John (95-100 CE). In the sixteenth chapter of Mark, the women come to the tomb, but they never encounter the risen Christ. There is simply an empty tomb and a proclamation of new life. The gospel ends with fear and silence on the part of the women (there is a longer ending to Mark that biblical scholars believe is a later addition). In my estimation, the less details, the better it is. Let the mystery stand without too many distractions! As the other gospels are written, the stories of the resurrection become more and more physical with the Risen One even eating a piece of cooked fish (Luke 24: 41-43)!

When we reflect on the concept of resurrection, we may imagine bodies walking out of tombs and life after death (both of which none of us have ever experienced), but what if we expand our notion of resurrection to include the life that we are experiencing now. What if the Easter proclamation is not just about life after death, but about how much more deeply and authentically our lives could be lived in the present moment. We can live at the surface of life or we can live in the profound depths of life. The Easter proclamation is the challenge to go deeper into life and to live it to the fullest. When we do, we realize that there is an enduring and an eternal quality of life that is so strong and so powerful that even physical death cannot bring it to an end.

Stephen Hawking once said, "Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious." Can we have the courage to look into the empty tomb and as we peer into the darkness to believe that the emptiness is the womb where limitless possibilities are waiting to be born? The realization of possibilities is what resurrection is all about. Somehow and in some way, we are made to endure! Perhaps this is an understanding of resurrection that even Stephen Hawking would agree with!

A blessed Easter of new possibilities!
Pastor Medwid