



## northminster presbyterian church

2400 old alabama road  
roswell, georgia 30076

08-Apr-2007 Easter Sunday

**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 65:17-25 John 20:1-18

**SERMON:** New Light For The World (Rev. Dr. Jim Simpson)

Question: How Many Dogs Does It Take to Change A Light Bulb? Answers: *Golden Retriever* - The sun is shining, the day is young, we've got our whole lives ahead of us, and you're inside worrying about a stupid burned out bulb? *Border Collie* - Just one. And then I'll replace any wiring that's not up to code. *Dachshund* - You know I can't reach that stupid lamp! *Lab* - Oh, me, me!!!! Pleeeeeeeeeeeze let me change the light bulb! Can I? Can I? Huh? Huh? Huh? Can I? Pleeeeeeeeeeeze, please, please, please! *Jack Russell* - I'll just pop it in while I'm bouncing off the walls and furniture. *Old English Sheep Dog* - Light bulb? I'm sorry, but I don't see a light bulb? *Greyhound* - It isn't moving. Who cares? *Toy Poodle* - I'll just blow in the Border Collie's ear and he'll do it. By the time he finishes rewiring the house, my nails will be dry.

Question: How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb? Answers: It depends largely on denomination. *Charismatic* - Only one. Hands already in the air. *Roman Catholic* - None, candles only. *Baptists* - At least 15. One to change the light bulb, and 14 on the committee to approve the change and decide who needs to bring the potato salad and fried chicken. *Episcopalians* - Three. One to call the electrician, one to mix the drinks and one to talk about how much better the old one was. *Presbyterians* - None. Lights will go on and off at pre-destined times

Question: How many Evangelists does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: Thirty-three. One to do it, two to bask in its glory, 30 to take a collection in the bulb's name.

Question: How many teenage girls does it take to screw in a light bulb? Answer: One, but she'll be on the phone for five hours telling all her friends about it.

Question: How many accountants does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: What kind of answer did you have in mind?

Question: How many chiropractors does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: Only one, but it takes nine visits.

Question: How many visitors to a gallery of modern does it take to screw in a light bulb? Answer: Two. One to do it and one to say "Huh! My four-year old could've done that!"

Question: How many consultants does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: We don't know, they never get past the feasibility study.

The event we celebrate today, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is for sure the very center of the Christian faith. It is the entire story, the big kahuna, the whole shebang. The resurrection is everything including the kitchen sink, the numero uno, the loaded potato, the whole kit and caboodle, the whole enchilada, the whole ball game, the alpha and omega, the a to z!

The affirmation at the center of this day: that Jesus was crucified, dead and buried, and that on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, can never be reduced to a statement to which we give or withhold intellectual assent. The Easter event, the presence of the Risen Lord with us, is much more than this – the Resurrection is an experience that can and needs to take hold of our lives TODAY, grab hold of our imaginations TODAY, and fill us with wonder and forever change the way we live today and from now on.

What does Easter mean? On the first Easter morning, those who walked and ran to the tomb into which Jesus' body had been placed had no immediate answer to this question either, even though the evidence was right there before their eyes. They were presented with the challenge of trying to make sense out of something that at first appeared senseless.

If you would turn to the inside left page in your Church Family News, consider the sentence at the bottom of the page: *"In raeding a wrod, the olny neceassry tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. Yuor mnid suppleis the wrods form tohse cules alnoe. It trues out all tohse worgngly pacled lteters."*

At first glance we might see merely a jumble of random letters, but after a moment or two the actual meaning appears: *"In reading a word, the only necessary thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. Your mind supplies the words from those clues alone. It tunes out all those wrongly placed letters."*

This was somewhat the experience of those who stood beside and inside the empty tomb! They didn't immediately declare, "Jesus is Alive!" Even though Jesus had told them many times that He would go to Jerusalem where He would face death and come back to them on the third day, Mary and Simon Peter and John, when they saw the empty tomb, did not immediately turn to each other and say: "Remember what Jesus told us, this is what He meant! The Lord is Risen! He is Risen indeed!" But with time, and some help and prompting, they connected what they saw with their eyes with their memories of Jesus' words, and with their experience of their Savior. And slowly, as the pieces were fit together, it came to make sense: *Jesus is Alive! The Lord is Risen! Risen indeed!* And it would be this experience that would propel the new church forward despite opposition and persecution. And still today the good news communicated through the resurrection is shared in every part of our world.

Let me ask each of you this question today: *What will Easter mean to you this year?*

And let me pose another question, a paraphrase of those overused jokes at the start of this sermon: *How many light bulbs does it take to change the world?* The answer: Just one! *And this is no joke.*

The compact fluorescent light bulb, or "CFL" for short, will soon alter the fate of the entire planet. It's a product with the potential to go a long way to solving some of the most profound issues facing our world today: rising prices, energy consumption, global warming and dependence on imported oil. Yes, it costs a little more than those light bulbs that have seen little or no change in almost a century, but it offers great energy savings over its ten-year life span. CFL's give bright, steady light to rival regular bulbs using 75% less electricity, generating 200 degrees less surface heat than the traditional bulb, and it will need to be changed every 10yrs not every four months.

The potential impact of using CFL's is staggering. If every one of the 100 million homes in America swapped out just one incandescent with a swirl, the energy saved would eliminate the equivalent pollution of 1.3 million cars on the road, or save enough electricity to power a city of 1.5 million people or close two power plants. If that's not mind-blowing enough, consider this: Many modern homes have between 50 and 100 light bulb sockets (go ahead, go home and count 'em!). What would the impact be if every home installed five swirls, 10, 50?

Let's take a survey? How many of you have at least a few CFL at home? How many of you have turned over the majority of your lights to CFL?

Major manufacturers and retailers are promoting these bulbs because they just make so much sense. Wal-Mart realized the benefits first-hand. They decided to replace all the lights in ceiling fan displays with them. That's 40 bulbs per store in 3,230 stores. The savings? A projected \$6 million a year in electric bills. Difficult to believe that the transformation of one simple common item that everyone has taken for granted for more than 100 years would actually be a solution to some of the major problems facing the world?

Difficult to believe that a new light has the potential to save us all? *On Easter Sunday I think not!* If the CFL can do all this, how much more true is it for the *light* brought into our world and into our lives by the Risen Lord Jesus Christ? Easter is God's original lighting revolution. And, yes, God is very interested in us caring for the planet and there are plenty of things all of us could and should do at home and in the church to make a difference!!

*What does Easter mean?*

Bad stuff happens, no question about that: hurt, pain, exploitation, oppression, AIDS, strokes, heart attacks, loss, war, pandemics, SARS. We can all likely add something to this list out of our own personal or family experience. Bad stuff does happen, and our lives are spent trying to avoid the bad stuff and to hold onto, if only momentarily, the good stuff. Bad stuff happens and so we ask: *Why?* Often times the answer is: *We don't know, we may never know.* Really bad stuff happens. There are times, from our limited human perspective, when it seems that more 'bad' than 'good' happens. But good stuff does happen! *Resurrection happens!!* Victory over death, the ultimate, final terrible thing has happened. Death the great and seemingly final enemy, is defeated. *God always has the last word and the first word as well.* The first word was "*Let there be light.*" The last word will contain and convey the same Good News that was contained in the first word. The Word God speaks is always about Good News. Whether the "actual" word used is love or grace or mercy or forgiveness or peace or joy or justice or repentance or conversion or renewal, God's Word is always Good News – *all because of Easter!*

As a boy, Robert Louis Stevenson was intrigued by the work of the old lamplighter who went about with a ladder and a torch, lighting the gas lamps for the night. One evening in Edinburgh, Scotland, as young Robert stood watching with childish fascination, his parents heard him exclaim, "Look, look! There's a man out there punching holes in the darkness!" God's Good News, Easter, *punches holes* - lifting the shadows - bringing God's light into our world and into our lives.

*What does Easter mean?* In his book, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything*, Brian McLaren talks about one implication of Easter in this way: "As a result of the resurrection, the first believers came to call Jesus 'Lord.' Although that term has become rather commonplace for us today, in its original context 'Lord' was a term that was reserved for the Roman emperor. In other words, "to say Jesus is Lord is to declare one's allegiance to a different empire or kingdom." That is the reason that so many of the early Christians were persecuted, "not for their religious beliefs but for their lack of patriotism and national loyalty in refusing to say the expected 'pledge of allegiance' to Caesar." Easter means Good News. Easter means life. *Easter means offering our loyalty to our Savior and to our Savior first and to our Savior alone!*

The story of Easter morning is without a doubt at the heart of our faith. Today, by our presence here we have chosen to be reminded of Easter. We have given priority to understanding what happened all those years ago and what Easter means and asks of us today. Now we are all invited to share and live this great glad news by aligning our lives with the life of the Risen Jesus. We are all invited to trust and follow Jesus, to plan to live as Jesus did, to show mercy, to offer forgiveness, to seek peace.

I want to call each of you, whether you're here every week or once a year, to commit yourself to Jesus Christ our Risen Savior, our resurrected Lord. *Find yourself in the Easter story.* Allow the Risen Jesus to renew your life, to change your way of living and through you change the life of your family, your community, your world. As a church community, week by week, as we worship and serve, listen and care, our goal is to help each other align our lives with the new light for the world that comes to us in Jesus Christ. As we do this, bad stuff still happens. We still fail and fall, but we also come to experience an unshakeable hope, a generous love. As friends and followers of Jesus, we do impact our hurting world as we live and share our experience of the hope and love of the Risen Jesus. Easter begins today! *Change the bulb! Switch on! Get connected! Join in! New light for the World! The Lord is Risen! Risen Indeed! Amen.*

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**Isaiah 65:17-25**

17For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. 19I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. 20No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. 21They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord— and their descendants as well. 24Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

**John 20:1-18**

1Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10Then the disciples returned to their homes. 11But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

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