



# Easter People, Raise Your Voices

The designation dances; it's a delight...“Easter People.” “Children of the Resurrection,” “the Redeemed;” trying to match the term is an exercise in joy and praise. We do not need to be told to raise our voices, but we might need some coaching. That's the work of the one who leads congregational singing, whatever form that leading might take. Coaching is a good word here, so is “encouraging.”

Being an encourager amongst the congregation, gathered and scattered, is a characteristic of an Easter person. “Every day to us is Easter.” Death has been overpowered. Physical death is at the top of the list, but the list is long. The death of relationships, trust, hospitality, community, retirement funds, jobs, a dream, a way of life...these are prominent on the heavy list. Easter people, raise your voices in worship and in encouragement to those who journey with you.

Such encouragement is a gift that is shared, given back and forth to each other. And in each giving, the gift is renewed and replenished. The resurrection keeps happening and people keep rushing from the empty tomb. Upon hearing the good news, others rush to look for themselves. Voices raised in testimony and praise, this is the singing of Easter people. This is the church, alive and well and present in the world. Shouting to the world and to each other about all the things we are against throws the whole process in reverse. It buries instead of resurrects. Easter people shout the good news. Nothing could be more winsome.

“Even when life overwhelms us,” here is the nugget of this hymn. Easter people are not immune or in denial. Life can be overwhelming: too big, too dangerous and too exhausting. Easter people know this as well as anyone. They simply refuse to be defeated by this sort of death. They rush to the tomb to see if the particular brand of death they fear is still in there. They find that it isn't, the tomb is still empty. Joy doesn't erupt from a problem solved at that point, it erupts from the presence of hope. This is the message of the Easter people... hope of overcoming, because death has been put in its place, in proper perspective. But there's more in this hymn and in Jesus' resurrection.

There's an easily misunderstood concept in this hymn and we must deal with it. In stanza two we sing, “For our Lord empowered us to triumph over every foe.” This can lead to triumphalism, that is to say, a feeling that we are somehow superior. This is very dangerous to the work and spread of the gospel. We can face “every foe” from a position of strength, even power. But, the strength and power belong to God, not to us. Humility is our inheritance, not boasting. Jesus is our picture of God, and our picture of power. Jesus died for even our enemies and calls us to love them as deeply. “There,” we might say, “is a proven way to get yourself killed.” “Easter people, raise your voices...Christ has brought us heaven's choices.” If we say of the Jews in Jesus' day, “They didn't want that kind of king,” we must be willing to say of ourselves in our day, “We don't want that kind of victory.”

“Easter people, raise your voices, sounds of heaven in earth should ring.”

Terry W. York  
© 2010 Celebrating Grace, Inc.