
It is downright astonishing just how many ways we humans have invented to skirt, to laugh at, to avoid saying: die. To avoid saying: He died. She died. I’m going to die.

A euphemism is the substitution of an inoffensive word or phrase for something generally considered offensive or insensitively explicit. In other words, So-and-So didn’t die. He fell asleep. She crossed the Jordan. He went to his reward. She joined the invisible choir.

Well, please forgive me for being insensitively explicit, but Easter is no time for euphemisms. Forgive me my directness, my candor, my bald-faced, brazen bluntness: you’re going to die.

You see, on Easter Sunday you can’t really, you shouldn’t really, dance around it. Easter is premised on death. On mortality. On the medical fact of the impermanence of our flesh and bones, organs and tissues … on the fact that these bodies we wear, these forms we inhabit they have a limit, an expiration date.

On Easter Sunday we tell the story of Jesus who died. He had been killed. Executed. Crucified. After a time on that cross, his body ceased functioning, his organs stopped. No beating heart, no pulsing blood, no expanding lungs. Jesus died. As it goes in the creed: He was dead and buried.

And on Easter Sunday we also tell the story of an empty tomb. We tell this: that Jesus who had died—who was dead, who was medically, clinically, scientifically, mortician-pronouncing dead—is alive.

We are here today, Christians go to church today—we pull out all the stops today: thundering organ and thumping timpani, blasting trumpet and crashing cymbals—because that death, that dying—the pain and shame of it, the grief and heartache of it, while they happened, while they are real and heart-wrenching, and they hurt like hell—they are not the last word.

Death doesn’t get the last word. God does. The last word is resurrection. Somebody say: Hallelujah!

You can use euphemisms if you like: Stairway to heaven. Entered the pearly gates. Entered into glory. Six feet under. Sleeping with the fishes. Taking a dirt nap. Or, you can just say this: My loved one died.
But don’t stop there. Say it true. My loved one died. Then, say this: But death is not the end. Death doesn’t get the last word. God does. The last word is resurrection. The last word is life. Death is dead. God wins.

Somebody say: Hallelujah!

**Scripture Reading**

Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”