

Aired 4/04/2021 – [Watch on YouTube](#) (high-speed available)

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***God is not a noun we are compelled to define; God is a verb we are invited to live.***

*~ John Shelby Spong, in [Unbelievable: Why Neither Ancient Creeds  
Nor the Reformation Can Produce a Living Faith Today](#)*

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What is Easter calling us to this year? The good news about annual rituals and holidays like Easter is that they continually remind us that we are connected to a greater story; they remind us of eternal truths that carry us through moments of uncertainty and challenge. The past year has surely been such a time.

We perhaps welcomed Easter this year with more relief and enthusiasm than in past years. It heralds the coming of spring, new life, and rebirth – just what we needed to hear! It also heralds the joy of emergence, to some extent, from the isolation and lockdown of this past year.

***What message did Easter hold for you this year? Did it bring with it any significance beyond what it had in years past? Did you perhaps reinterpret Easter’s message in light of your own past year? How so?***

Christianity has so many interpretations of the Easter story, including whether or not a physical resurrection occurred. Was the tomb empty? Does it matter? ***What is your understanding of the Easter story? Has it changed over the course of your life? Does it offer any insights or wisdom to you on your current spiritual journey?***

In our Sunday talk, we explored the vision of Bishop John Shelby Spong, who sees an Easter story without a physical resurrection but surely with a miraculous event of some nature. He points out that the physicality of Jesus’ resurrection became more amplified as time passed, and stories grew. In his view, the “Easter moment” had nothing to do with a physical resuscitation of Jesus.

Spong believes that the miracle occurred when the disciples, particularly Peter, understood the message of Jesus’ life and his death as one of surpassing love for each other in the face of violence and hatred. The power of Jesus’ message lay in love, not atonement and sacrifice. At that Easter moment, Peter experienced Jesus as a continuing presence and not as a past memory. For him, Jesus remained alive.

That was the message and the promise of Easter for me, this year. Jesus brought us into new covenant with God, and the way we step into that new covenant is by entering into new covenant with each other to heal, lift up, support and comfort. Easter’s message is not that we individually are saved, but that we collectively find life together.

Here is the reading from last week – food for thought and discussion!

“The Easter experience in the New Testament, contrary to what we have traditionally been taught over the years, is not about bodies walking out of graves. It is far more profound than that. It is about God being seen in human life. By “God” I do not mean a supernatural, invasive God, who violates the laws of nature in order to enter time and space. I mean a transcendent dimension of life into which all can enter, an experience in which life is expanded, love is unlimited and being is enhanced. I mean the God whose presence and power calls us all into our essential oneness, our universal consciousness, our interconnectedness. We are part of who and what God is. God is not a noun we are compelled to define; God is a verb that we are invited to live. There is a difference, and it is in that difference that resurrection is both experienced and entered. That, in the last analysis, is what resurrection is all about.”

~ John Shelby Spong, in *Unbelievable: Why Neither Ancient Creeds Nor the Reformation Can Produce a Living Faith Today*