

# Easter Monday

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The first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection, was also the first day of creation, according to Genesis 1. Bible scholars agree that the first chapter of Genesis originated in Babylon, while the people of Judah were there in exile, in "lockdown" for about seventy years. It was composed by a priest as a poem to be performed in communal worship. It was an act of hope for people in a hopeless and deeply confusing situation: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

The way the creation story is told, reflects the way they experienced their own lives: "The earth was formless and empty." The words translated as "formless and empty" can also mean "wild and chaotic," as the next words confirm:

"darkness was over the surface of the deep." Into this dark, chaotic and threatening situation the priest begins his poem on creation with the majestic words: "Let there be light!" The people sitting in deep darkness hear the message that God is the One who creates light in the darkness; who banishes darkness with the soft power of light.

Our global situation with the corona virus is a similar experience of darkness and chaos. We have never been here before. Like the people of Judah in exile, who missed their land, their temple, their king (and freedom), we sit in our homes (or in temporary shelters), missing our relatives, our joint worship, our freedom of movement. And there are thousands of people across the world in hospitals, struggling to recover. Easter Sunday, the first day of the new creation, mirrors the first day of creation, as the day in which God says to a broken and fearful world: "Let there be light!" At least we know that in this crisis God is on our side, not on the side of darkness. As the lockdown lengthens and puts more strain on your resources, courage and patience, hear the good news: God is still the One who creates light in dark situations.

The creator God who spoke the world into existence is the re-creator God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. The creator God who put the darkness into its place, giving it a name ("the night") and removed it as a looming threat, is the One who broke the power of death and evil through Christ's resurrection. The Spirit of God who was "hovering over the waters" and blew like a mighty wind to silence those primeval storms and opened the way for light to shine, today hovers over our despair and fear like a mother bird to let the light of hope shine on us. In Hebrew the first word of Genesis is *bereshit* (in the beginning). The Jewish rabbis discussed the question why the creation story (and the whole Bible) starts with the letter B. They came up with a wonderful answer. The Hebrew letter B looks like this: ב and the rabbis explained that the Bible starts with this letter so that believers would not ask what is above, below or behind them.

Since Hebrew is written from right to left, the letter B is open to the front (to the future), but closed at the top, the bottom and the back.

We can never fully understand who God is (above, below and behind us); God will remain a mystery, but God has given us faith as a home. The Hebrew letter B is called *beit*, which means "house," So the whole mystery of faith is revealed in this one letter, this house of faith. In the words of a Jewish parent to their children: "My child, even if we are in a foreign land, we have firm ground under our feet, a roof over our heads, our back is covered, and we have a future ahead of us... Always think about the first letter of our Book, that is our whole faith" (from Nico ter Linden, *Het verhaal gaat ...*, p.10).

And that is why our effort to provide shelter to homeless people is so important. The future is so much wider open to those who have solid ground under their feet, a roof over their heads, and whose backs are covered. This "house" of faith is not limited to the "spiritual" sphere. Yes, it is about a spiritual house of faith, to believe that God created light and opened the future by raising Jesus from the dead. And to live that faith every day. It is also about physical, material houses that give real shelter to real people against cold, wind and rain.

Our mission is: living in this precarious house of faith, open to God's future inviting others into this house, to this journey with God's promises sharing our homes with those who are homeless working tirelessly that everyone will experience the dignity, and shoulder the responsibility, of having a home where they are safe and secure

Prayer

Creator God, we praise you

For creating light against darkness

For giving hope to the people of Judah in the midst of their exile

For raising the Lord Jesus from the dead, to shine light into our darkness

God of life, we pray

Help us to live in this house of faith, moving forward with your promises

Shine your light of hope on us in this dangerous time

Protect us and the people in our shelters against the virus

Let your creative Spirit hover over us and guide us

to do this work with dignity and unity

In the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ

Amen