

ONWARD

from the desk of Chris Greer



Hey there, ! He is RISEN!

Do you ever forget that Easter is for *you*? Or - to be more precise - do you ever wonder if God's extravagant love could *really* be spent on a screwup like you?

(Maybe I'm the only screwup. Or doubter. But I doubt it. ☺)

If you ever get hung up believing your vices are darker than the light of Easter, then this bread's for you...

quote of the week

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

— Jesus (John 6:35)

Last week I returned an unused item to Kroger, and the customer in line before me asked the manager for a price check on a few items. When he heard the bologna in his basket cost \$1.35, he said quietly, "That's more expensive than last week."

When the gluten-free bread rang up for \$6.44, his head hung low, and he said, "No thanks. I can't afford that one today."

I mourned the increasing cost of groceries and the difficult choices some are forced to make. Then I resolved to buy the bread for him.

But before I could offer, he asked for two packages of Lucky Strike cigarettes from behind the counter. They were on sale for \$4.95 each.

My latent legalism flared, and I instantly reconsidered my generosity. After all, the man could afford twice as much food if he put back the cigarettes.

I was torn, wondering if my modest generosity would enable an addict...or provide for a man in need. Or both.

The Spirit of Jesus whispered, "Won't your generosity paint a picture of what I did for him — and you? I gave my life for yours long before you kicked your habits."

The first five words of Romans 5:6 and the last five words of Romans 5:8 came to mind. Verse six begins with, *"When we were utterly helpless..."* Verse eight ends with, *"...while we were still sinners."*

Both clauses reveal one of the greatest glories of Easter.

The meat between those two pieces of bread completes the gospel meal: *"Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners...God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us."*

The Trinity didn't hold back the Bread of Life until we quit smoking. He provides eternal sustenance *while we're desperately addicted, not once we're cleaned up.*

If you ever find yourself mumbling, "I'm not worthy," or thinking "This can't be for me," or wondering "Does God really know about my vices?" it's time to memorize this: *"God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* (Romans 5:8)

The price is paid, and the bread is given, even while we cling to the cigarettes in our hands.

Richard — the man in the grocery store — cried when I paid for his bread. Then, in a surprising act of gratitude, he recited all of Psalm 91 for me. With a final "Thank you", he wiped his eyes and walked outside with his modest meal and cigarettes.

Godspeed and Happy Easter, Richard.

And thank you, Father, for reminding me that you come for us right where we are. And nowhere else.

Onward,

Chris

dad joke of the week

I went to a smoke shop only to discover it'd been replaced by an apparel store.

Clothes, but no cigar.

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