



# NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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## Dear Friends,



*Jesus was deeply troubled...Lazarus, Come forth!*

*(see John 11:1-44)*

*"This is more than grief for Lazarus. This perturbation of spirit is caused by the presence of the Great Antagonist. God is revealing, through the Son, that he hates Death and pities us because we must bow our necks under its terrible stroke. Jesus is deeply moved in spirit because He is gathering His forces for this mighty confrontation with the "exceeding great power," the Supreme Enemy of all that God has purposed. This is a truly cosmic duel. But in the end...it is no contest."*

*Fleming Rutledge from The Undoing of Death*



It is the week following Easter. Headlines this Resurrection Sunday were of the Islamic terrorist bombs set off in Sri Lanka. We are now learning that over 300 Christian worshippers have been killed. Had this not taken the front page, the ongoing yet little reported slaughter of Christians in Nigeria and other places would still not have been reported. No news there! But an understandable few headlines here and there imply that *Christ is risen and a church family is dead*. One shockingly clear and honest headline screams *WHERE IS GOD?*



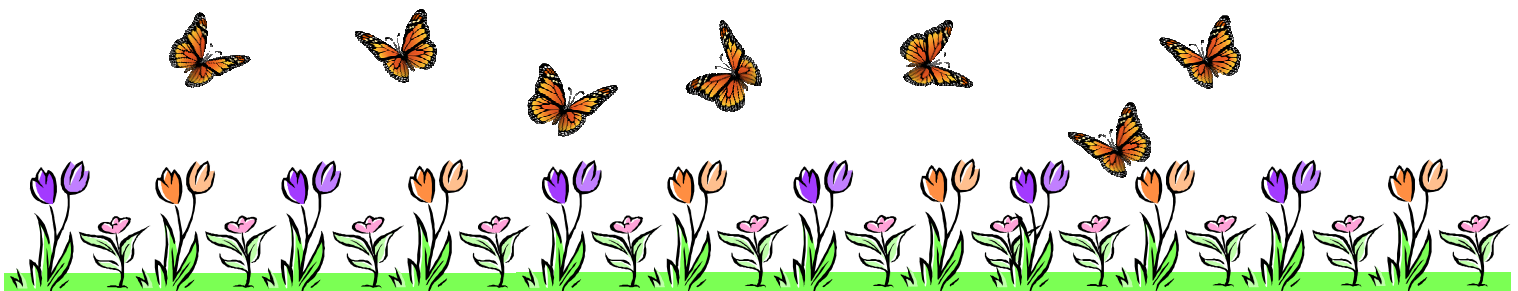
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I have often told my children and those I teach that we are not able to face life until we have faced death. And I believe that. But even I who have dealt with death in many settings, know that I have not faced all death. For I have not faced Sri Lanka or Nigeria or China, Iraq, Syria, or even Cuba. I have not yet faced the loss of spouse or child. So who am I to pontificate about facing death?

No one can face death in every person's experience. We are not capable of empathizing with every level of pain and loss imaginable. And some things are simply unimaginable, like the Charlotte family who buried their 20-year-old daughter shot to death in her car by a random shooter, who killed her just for kicks. Yet there are some sorrowing people who have transcended such evil, and have done so wisely and well. They are those who have understood the meaning of the Cross and the Empty Tomb. They have not allowed the Cross to become a shiny trinket hanging from a gold chain. The empty tomb is not just a lyric in a Christian song. The Cross is understood in its horror so the Empty Tomb is seen in its triumph.

But on the other hand, there are those who have reduced the Cross to a sanitized movie set. Even the graphic realism of Mel Gibson's The Passion has not fully revealed what the Cross means, with all due respect to the effort. In fairness, we cannot ever fully grasp the meaning of the Cross anymore than we can fully embrace the sufferings of the world. But we can reject the perfumed corpse of cultural denial, and allow the full impact of death to communicate its hopeless message: "So this is death. This is what it means for an irreplaceable treasure I love to die." It is in the face of raw naked death that we then can really respond with the profoundly opposite and far greater shout: "HE HAS RISEN! DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?!"

He is risen! So, why the horror headlines? Why the unreported daily murders? The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. The death of Jesus was the beginning of the end for death. His Resurrection was the beginning of the beginning of Life. We who live in the in-between of the end of death and the birth of Life are to occupy. We carry on our business of loving, trusting, communicating, giving and forgiving, until He returns. For when He comes, the last enemy, Death, will finally and fully and forever, die. Until then, we are able at the Empty Tomb to live in the light of full Life, because at the Cross we have faced the darkness of death, partaking in Redemption Story.



## Book Review

# The Battle for Middle-earth

by Fleming Rutledge

Whether you are a Lord of the Rings fan or not, this book is important and helpful. (All books by Fleming Rutledge are. She may be the best writer of our current time, with very few bones to spit out and a wealth of wisdom and discernment to digest.) Fleming Rutledge has taken the entire Rings story, beginning with The Hobbit, and helped make clear the not so evident reason why the Rings story has such a deep spiritual impact on those who read it, some more than others. For those who have never been interested, what I say here may seem fanciful. It is only a lack of personal experience with the story that might evoke such a response. For those who do know, who have, like me, been guided and helped through our own personal battle with Mordor, you will find reading Rutledge's book about Lord of the Rings to be nearly as meaningful as reading the Rings Trilogy itself. Once you have tasted of the spirit of her writing in this book, you might just go ahead and dive into her other books. The Undoing of Death is a record of her Good Friday Sermons. Don't think that is a boring prospect. It is like rich food to a starving soul. And her magnum opus, The Crucifixion, should be required reading for every seminary student, pastor, and serious disciple of Jesus.



## Closing Thoughts...



Young people with all the thrills and new experiences of youth before them express to me a sense of foreboding, that things simply cannot go on as they are and that something - for good or for ill - must occur that will alter the course of the world. I know. We had a similar sense in the 70s. Gas lines, Middle East conflicts, terrorism, and the release of books like [The Late Great Planet Earth](#) helped us form the corporate view that we were the last generation. Ominous as all that was (and still is) we were not the last generation. And now we must help our children understand that we are to occupy till the King comes. To occupy means simply to carry on business. Live, love, laugh, learn, and labor. And whether we are the ones that will see the return of the King or not, we will have the joy of participating in His Kingdom work so that if He comes or we go through the vale of death, we won't even notice any big change, because we have been in His Presence all along, and Kingdom life is increasingly manifesting in and through us. He really means it when He says 365 times in scripture (one for each day of the week) **DO NOT BE AFRAID.**



*Celebrating Life! Clay & Mary*

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