

Do you know the story, the real Easter story?

Did you hear about Jesus, who lived 2000 years ago, who traveled around Israel, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding the hungry, teaching everyone about God's coming kingdom?

Yes, but did you also hear how he upset the people in authority, those who thought they already knew all about God?

He was in trouble, and he should not have gone to Jerusalem for the festival. He should have gone into hiding, saved his own skin!

But no, Jesus rode into town on a donkey, and all the people cheered, waved palm branches, and shouted praises to God!

"Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

And Jesus made trouble in the temple, he made the leaders angry. He knew that Jerusalem and the wonderful temple would be destroyed by the Romans. They were afraid there'd be a riot!

So the Temple guards arrested him, in the dead of night!

One of his best friends betrayed him. The others all ran away!

The Roman soldiers put him in prison, whipped him, humiliated him, then nailed him to a cross.

He hung there on the cross all afternoon.

Until he died.

His body was carefully lifted down, and put into a tomb, a cave in the ground, and a large stone was hauled over the entrance.

His friends wept while they hid, afraid they would be arrested next. They could not believe that Jesus had died.

How could it have happened!? He was God's chosen one. Why did God let it happen?!

After the festival was over, the women went to the tomb, so early in the morning that it was still half dark. They wanted to care for Jesus' body.

But when they got there, the stone had been rolled away, the tomb was open! And strange men, shining with light, were there, saying that Jesus was gone!

Gone where?! Who had taken him? The women were desperate to know, shocked, confused. They ran to tell the others.

And then suddenly, Jesus was standing there, talking to them, saying "Don't be afraid! Peace be with you."

He was alive! Not a ghost, not half dead, but amazingly made new, made better than new. He still had the marks in his hands where the nails had gone in, but he was changed.

That day, and many other days, Jesus met with his friends, until God lifted him up into heaven.

Even that was not the end of the story, only just the beginning, because Jesus sent his Spirit on his followers. And that same Spirit is with us now! In this Spirit we know God's life in our lives.

That's the Easter story, the most dramatic, amazing story ever told. It's 2000 years old, but still great news.