

# *No News ≠ No News*

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

*Rev. Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel*

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*Egg Sample Basket © 2022 Rod E.S.Q.*

The earliest versions of the book of Mark end in a cliff-hanger. As a group of friends of Jesus go to visit his tomb, they find that the boulder has been rolled away, and a mysterious man confirms that Jesus is not there and hints that he has been lifted from that place. With little more concrete information than the fact that the tomb is empty, the friends leave with a sense of terror, mystery, and silence. And the book ends with the ominous words “...for they were afraid.” (Mark 16:8)

Later versions of Mark had a couple of endings that have some rather amazing news, but for a while, both the characters in the story and the readers of Mark, were left in suspense.

Now, just because we don’t hear news, or we aren’t told this news, doesn’t mean that there aren’t newsworthy events in the works.

For instance, on April 18, 1930, the newly-established British Broadcasting Corporation (the BBC), had a rather short report, which I’m including here in its entirety:

*“Good evening. Today is Good Friday. There is no news.”*

This was followed by piano music.

Now, in the time and the place in which *we* live, that kind of announcement might prompt a wistful longing for what might sound

like a simpler time. We might even wonder if our current news outlets could ever dare giving such calming reports, and offer us a welcome break from the current flood of usually worrisome news.

But, of course, although there was no news *reported* by the BBC that particular day, we know that events *happened* on that day. Things occurred that are in the historical record, and they were reported in other places, especially in those places that were most affected by those events.

In fact, rather significant and noteworthy events happened on April 18, 1930 – at least, the kind of things that we might well hear reported on the news today (and yes, much of this was what we would call bad news). Typhoon Leyte swept through the Philippines, causing widespread damage, much in the way that we recognized this week the news from tropical storm Megi (in the Philippines, no less). Another tragic event was the death of several parishioners, many of them children, at a Romanian church in Costești, when candles for the Good Friday service ignited some of the drapery.

And... there was also a large rebellion in the Bengal province of British India, where British Imperial troops were called in to quell this uprising by colonized peoples, who disagreed with the colonial powers. Somehow, that particular event didn't make it into the BBC's Good Friday report.

Even when we *do* keep meticulous track of the news, there are some days in which the news may still occasionally seem... lighter than others, especially when compared to our times.

Of course, the noteworthiness of events has a certain inherent subjectivity to it, but it *is* possible to have a methodical approach to gauge which days were more noteworthy than others.

The events database *True Knowledge* did just that. It is now known as *Evi* and it is part of what powers the electronic assistant *Alexa*. And according to a computer scientist who worked in the development of this database, the day that is considered to have the least noteworthy events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in other words, its most boring day – is April 11, 1954 (apparently April is that kind of a month).

In terms of the number of news events, and their relative significance, April 11, 1954 had fairly few. Among the highlights of the day were a number of sporting competitions, and a fairly low-key election in Belgium. The most notable birth was possibly Ian Akyildiz, a Turkish electrical engineer who has written a few textbooks and has done some work on cellular technology (though you've probably never heard of him).

So, what are we to make of days like April 18, 1930, when the BBC reported that there was no news? Or days like April 11, 1954, which some database engineers consider to be the most boring day of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

Well, the first thing that jumps out at me, is that the lack of news on the BBC does not equal a lack of news, and certainly not a lack of events. The typhoon that swept the Philippines on April 18 of 1930, would have been quite significant to the people that were directly affected by it. The fire at a church in Costești, Romania, that same day, meant that Good Friday would forever mean something different to the families of that parish and the citizens of that town. The rebellion in Bengal province that happened on that day was not insignificant to the colonized peoples of India, and in the wider context of the history of India, it was likely to have been a contributor to its eventual independence.

These may not have been considered newsworthy events to all people in every part of the world, but they were real things that happened to real people, with real meanings attached to them, and which, in their own

way had real consequences... some may well have eventually had *world-changing* consequences, even if they were overlooked – or maybe even intentionally ignored – by the news curators of a certain time and a certain place.

And even the seemingly-boring news items of April 11, 1954 would have had significance for the people involved in them... and to people who came after them, even if that significance might have been hidden. The different sporting events that were held that day would have been important to all sorts of sports fans – and I know some among you are that sort of people, who are unlikely to settle for a description of a sporting event as “boring”. That’s without even mentioning the athletes involved, for whom these might have been career-changing or even life-changing events, and who in turn may have gone to influence several generations to pay closer attention to physical activity, be it competitively, for fun, or for health.

The 1954 Belgian elections, and the modest legislative output that followed, may have been relatively unremarkable, but political decisions are never insignificant, and this election likely had enduring effects, even if many may have remained invisible for many years.

Even the innocuous birth of Ian Akyildiz, the electrical engineer who you’ve probably never heard of, likely had an effect on the people who he helped educate on his subject, or who built upon his inventions and technological developments.

No news does not equal no news.

There is always news, even if it is sometimes hidden underground, under a stone, [take out Easter egg] like an Easter egg waiting to be found and appreciated.

These days, we have no shortage of news, and yet amid the torrent of quite significant – if worrisome – news, there is a whole set of

noteworthy events happening that might still escape our attention, perhaps because their significance is not always immediately apparent, keeping us in suspense. And still, my friends, many of these are even good news.

Increasingly, we are now at a time when economic growth may well be decoupled from the need to emit greenhouse gasses – that is to say, it is no longer a given that reducing greenhouse emissions automatically means economic losses; sometimes, the opposite is now true, as green energy is increasingly making more business sense than dirtier energy. This did not happen overnight. Much of this came from long strings of days when nothing seemed to be happening, when it seemed there was no news on that front. To be sure, there are many daunting challenges ahead, but while fighting a climate crisis remains difficult it is not impossible.

Our responses to Covid threats continue to run into frustrating setbacks, yet even into the latest wave, we continue to see lower proportions of severe illness among our populations. A lot of it is due to international cooperation, and medical breakthroughs, many of which lay low in the public's attention until we saw their benefits months or years after they came about – you've heard me speak at length about these before. And that's not even mentioning the work of professionals around the world who continue to do life-saving and life-changing work, even though their feats are not routinely reported as headline news.

The list is long, my friends – and the problems on it are real – and there is an even longer list of people working on good news, even when we don't hear them.

My friends, we cannot ignore the serious facts and events that come along with the boulder of news we encounter everyday – *and* we will also do well to remember the knowledge that beneath that boulder, sometimes underground, lies a whole set of good news that make part of our interrelated web. News that we are part of and may unexpectedly uncover. News that we can invest our faith in.

My friends, let us engage in this good news.

So may it be,  
In hope and faith  
Amen

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## **Opening Hymn #142 Let There Be Light**

Words: Frances W. Davis, 1936-1976

Music: Robert J. B. Fleming, 1921-  
CONCORD 4.7.7.6.

## **Hymn #266 Now the Green Blade Riseth**

Words: John MacLeod Campbell Crum, 1872-1958, atl.,

© 1964 Oxford University Press

Music: Medieval French carol, harmony by Marcel Dupré, 1886-1971,

© Alphonse Leduc, Paris

NOEL NOUVELET 11.10.10.11.

## **Closing Hymn #61 Lo, the Earth Awakes Again**

~)-| Words: Samuel Longfellow, 1819-1892, arr.

Music: Lyra Davidica, 1708, version of John Arnold's *Compleat Psalmodist*, 1749

EASTER HYMN 7.7.7.7. with Alleluias