

Pastor Jon's Easter Sermon from April 17, 2022

How about some Easter Humor?

On Easter Sunday, the Pastor announced to the congregation, 'My wonderful parishioners, I have here in my hands three sermons..... A \$100 sermon that lasts five minutes A \$50 sermon that lasts fifteen minutes, and a \$20 sermon that lasts a full hour. Now, we'll take the collection and see which one I'll deliver.'

Alleluia Christ is Risen! Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!

The tomb was empty.

When the women looked into the tomb, it was empty. They were perplexed... definitely not joyful at first. Confused.

We understand empty, don't we? All we have to do is look around us... to watch the news. We hear of subway and mall shootings, the war in Ukraine, more and more extreme weather events, cancer and disease striking our own families, school threats, and yes, still Covid. Each of us is dealing with some form of empty in our lives.

And yet out of the emptiness of the tomb, God was doing a new thing... bringing hope to the world.

The empty tomb on Easter means that goodness is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate. And that the violence done to Jesus on Good Friday by people in power, much like the Vladimir Putins of today, will not have the last word.

Poet Annie Johnson Flint connects the cross moments in our life with Easter:

Some of us stay at the cross,
some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and raised with Christ
yet lingering still in the gloom.
Some of us 'bide at the Passover feast
with Pentecost all unknown,
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly place
that our Lord has made His own.

If the Christ who died had stopped at the cross,
His work had been incomplete.
If the Christ who was buried had stayed in the tomb,
He had only known defeat,
But the way of the cross never stops at the cross
and the way of the tomb leads on
To victorious grace in the heavenly place
where the risen Lord has gone.

I heard a story this week that really stuck with me. It is called “Wait three days.”

On Monday after Easter, an old flower lady was sitting in her usual place inside a small archway. At her feet, corsages were spread on an open newspaper. She was smiling, her wrinkled old face alive with some inner joy. On impulse, a passer-by said to her, “My, you look happy this morning!”

Why not?” she answered. “Everything is good.” She was dressed so shabbily and seemed so very old, so he asked her, “Don’t you have any troubles?”

“Honey, you can’t reach my age and not have troubles,” she replied. “Only it’s like Jesus on Good Friday. When He was crucified on Good Friday, that was the worst day for the whole world. When I get troubles, I remember that, and then I think of what happened only three days later... Easter, and our Lord arising. So, when things go wrong, I’ve learned to wait three days... and somehow things get better.” She smiled goodbye.

We know that everything isn’t always “good” and waiting three days doesn’t solve all our problems. But, through things like prayer and meditating on the cross in light of the resurrection, it can transform our cross moments from despair into the assurance of God’s presence with us.

To the women at the tomb that first Sunday, their mission had changed quickly from tearful mourners to becoming the first evangelists... from fear to hope. At the tomb they were terrified when the two angels appeared in dazzling clothes and sort of reprimanded the women. “Why do you look for the living among the dead? **He is**

not here, but has risen. Remember what he told you that he would be handed over to sinners, crucified, and in 3 days rise again.”

The women did remember Jesus’ words about dying and rising and went back and told the 11 disciples... the men. The women weren’t just errand runners for the angels, the women were card carrying disciples who were a part of Jesus’ inner circle... especially in Luke’s Gospel. When they shared the good news that Jesus had risen from the dead, the men didn’t believe them. They thought it was an idle tale. Isn’t that the truth? The Men not listening to the women in their life. I am still learning this lesson on a daily basis.

Eventually the women’s testimony was believed after Jesus appeared to others. If you think about it, we are here today 2000 years later, celebrating Easter and the empty tomb. Jesus is still alive and loose in the world through the work of the Holy Spirit.

You too are witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection. We aren’t just called to stare into an empty tomb. Easter demands a response. The women left and told others. The church is the living body of Christ in the world today. We carry the Easter of message of life over death, of goodness over evil, of love over hate to the world.

May Christ’s victory over death and the grave continue to permeate our world and bring peace and hope to our lives and in places like Ukraine.

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