

Easter Day 2018

Wars and rumors of wars

Refugees

The distance between rich and poor increasing

The average worker worried about having enough to get by

Fear of the stranger

Religious debates and divisions

Political leaders who seem to have no moral compass

Increasing violence

It was this way in the time of Jesus as well. The land of Israel conquered and occupied by the greatest army of the day, peace enforced by the sword, the local officials holding on to power by any means necessary. A time and place where you might easily become the next refugee fleeing for safety. A time and place where the average worker could work hard every day and yet still not be able to make enough to save.

The time of Jesus, a time it seems that is all too common down through the ages.

In this time, in this place, the world took a look at the way of Jesus and rejected it. For the power of force could see no place for the power of love. The desire for revenge saw no value in mercy. The rule of fear could not make place for peace. The forces of power in the world heard the message of Jesus and rejected it, crucified it, and went to bed thinking that their world was safely back to the normal order of things.

God had a different plan! God had a different plan from the very beginning, from the beginning of creation when God offered us a garden of peace and unity with all living things, looked at the world and called it very good. God had a way that was all about love and mercy and compassion and justice and forgiveness.

God was not willing to let that plan die.

He was not willing to let that way die.

And God did not.

Easter morning is the divine NO to the way of war and violence and greed and exploitation.

Easter morning is the divine NO to fear and injustice and division.

Easter morning is the divine rejection of death.

Easter morning is the divine "YES" to the way of love and life.

The forces of power in the world might have rejected the way of Jesus, but they could not extinguish his way, for the Father reached down into the grave and raised Jesus from the dead and forever since we shout with the angels Alleluia, Alleluia. Even at the grave we make our song Alleluia!

If the only place we sing alleluia is at the grave, in anticipation of eternal life with Jesus, we are missing a key point of the resurrection! The resurrection life is for here, now, for you and me and every person in this world. The resurrection life is the life of the follower of Jesus.

The resurrection life is the life of love in a world of hate;  
     the life of justice in a world of revenge;  
     the life of compassion in a world of fear.

The resurrection life is not about going about the normal ways of the world hoping that when I die I might go to heaven, it is about living into the kingdom of heaven now!

And, it is about doing so in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead, the sure and certain hope that this day we sing with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven - all those who have gone before us in life and death, just as one day our voices will join with theirs on that farthest shore.

I don't know about you, but some days I find it hard to even read the paper let alone watch any news, it just seems so awful, so depressing. Wars and rumors of wars. Corrupt government officials, the rising disparity between rich and poor, the casual disregard for human life shown by way violence seems to be simply accepted as normal. I can find it easier to not pay attention, to not listen, to simply retreat into a good book. When that happens I find myself repeating the words "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it!"

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it!

But not for lack of trying...

Just as the forces of the world tried to put the Love of God to death on the cross in Jesus day they try to do so today.

Sometimes the forces of the world try to kill the way of Jesus by violence as before. And sometimes those forces oppose the way of Jesus in a much more subtle fashion by using despair and cynicism,  
 by convincing us that it simply doesn't matter what we do,  
     by inviting us to question if the way of Jesus actually makes any difference at all,  
     and by convincing us that the gospel message is about piously accepting our lot in life in hopes of life in heaven.

Easter conquers our cynicism and despair.  
 Easter tells us that what we do matters in this world.  
 Easter shouts that the way of Jesus is the way of life!

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it!

Jesus said you are the light of the world.  
 Jesus said you will do greater things than these.

If all we do is rejoice in Easter that is good,  
and yet we sell ourselves short! We are called to **live** Easter!

Mary Magdalene has come to the tomb that first Easter morning in great grief. She knows that Jesus is dead. She is wrapped up in her own grief, held captive in darkness, unable to see the risen Christ in front of her until he calls her by name. Jesus calls her by name and restores her light.

Jesus calls each one of us by name. The Risen Christ knows us, loves us, calls us by name and invites us to live his way, the way of life, the way of love, the way of God. Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord names us in love and calls it to live the Easter way.

Mary went from grief to joy, from despair to hope, and she will be known from then on as the apostle to the apostles, the one who first proclaimed the resurrection.

When you feel the darkness overwhelm you, hear the voice of Jesus call your name...Mary. When you slip into despair and cynicism over the ways of the world, hear the risen Christ call your name...John. When you think that nothing can change this world, listen to the voice of our God call your name.... Peter, Robert, Karen, John, Linda.

When you start to fear, hear the voice of Jesus calling your name and hold on to faith in the resurrection. Do not be afraid, the angels say. Do not be afraid. Easter morning casts out fear. Love casts out fear.

The powers of this world want us to be afraid. The way of Jesus is a threat to those who refuse to embrace the love and forgiveness offered. Those who are afraid of the way of Jesus seek to keep us in fear as well. They would have us believe that the only power is that of force of arms and the might of money. The powers of this world seek to keep us enslaved to fear, to violence, to separation. But the powers of this world cannot stand against the force of Easter.

To embrace Easter is to cast off fear.

To embrace Easter is to embrace the truth that love wins. That we are one. That resurrection happens now, here, in this place and at this time.

Mary needed the message of Easter, she heard it, and embraced it, and lived it, and brought others into Easter life.

The world needs the message of Easter.

Hear the message of Easter, embrace the message of Easter, live the message of Easter, be the message of Easter. For Alleluia, Christ is risen indeed.