

Easter Sunday
March 23, 2008

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Emanuel Lutheran Church (ELCA), Dallas, Texas, USA

Scriptures: Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10

At some point, Easter sermons seem a little redundant. With the flowers, the colors, the music, the light, and the Gospel reading itself, if all of that doesn't convey the message that Jesus is risen from the dead, then there probably isn't anything I could say that would state it more clearly.

So maybe the real point of Easter sermons is supposed to be the "So what?" What difference does it make that Jesus was raised from the dead? What was the point?

Actually that is a good question. Because we look to Jesus as our Savior – the one whose death brought us forgiveness and reconciliation with God. I don't imagine that it was required for Jesus to become a Risen Savior. So why did God bother with the resurrection anyway?

There are a variety of theological and doctrinal answers to that question. But I think they can all be summed up in a much broader, less jargon way. Jesus was raised from the dead so that we might come to know one very important truth: God is a God of love and life; which mean that death, destruction, and despair never get the last word. Life, and Love will get the last word. And that gives us hope – no matter what.

There was a lot of rain this past week, which may have inconvenienced some of us; but it brought tragedy to many who lost loved ones who were swept away in the flood waters. My heart goes out to all the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters who know grief like the grief of the women who went to Jesus' grave that Easter dawn. In some ways, those women symbolize the grief and sorrow of all people who have known loss, who have become so filled with despair that they can't even imagine life being good again.

We live in a world where many, many people know that kind of grief and despair. The world is a broken place where, every day – Easter or not, people die. Violence, exploitation, and oppression continue unabated. Wars rage on. The wages of sin surely are death, destruction and despair. There will always be a lot of Good Friday in the world.

But we are here this morning to remember that Good Friday is never the end. Good Friday is never the last word. Easter comes. Resurrection happens. Life, new Life is God's answer. So even in the midst of our sorrow we can know that God will bring our hearts back to life again. That is the "So what?" of Easter.

And that promise is what gives us the hope and the strength to go on even in the face of the sin of the world. We can't just throw up our hands and turn our backs and walk away from the world and its suffering. Because we know that God isn't willing to do so. God has resurrection plans for the whole creation.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the angels give the message to the women to go to Galilee, there you will see Jesus. And just in case that wasn't enough, Jesus gives them the same

message, “You will see me in Galilee. Galilee is the place of their daily life, it represents daily living. That’s where they will encounter Jesus. In the midst of life.

In just a few more verses, in Matthew’s version of the story, we will see Jesus sending all the disciples out to go to all nations, to baptize them and to teach them everything that Jesus commanded. Which tells me that the Resurrection of Jesus is just the beginning of God’s final word of Life and Love. It continues even now, in our daily lives, whenever and wherever God’s new life and new hope breaks into the midst of our sorrows and despair.

We are called to live Easter lives in the midst of a Good Friday world. When we keep loving and caring and sharing in a world that hates and ignores and hoards, we give witness to the power of the Resurrection. We live the promise. We show the world what hope looks like. And we remind the world again that God’s last word is always Life and Love. And those can never die. Alleluia. Amen.