

April 4, 2021 – John 20:1-18 – Easter Sunday



Christ has risen! He has risen indeed!

Finally, we have reached Easter Sunday and left Lent and the rest of Holy Week behind us. It's time to rejoice and believe in the possibilities and the good that surrounds us and is part of our lives. And there is much of it if we only open our eyes and our ears and become more aware and appreciative of it.

The Easter resurrection story is one that is filled with the promise of good things and the hope that all things are possible, that is, if we believe and have faith.

Our focus on Palm Sunday was anticipatory celebration and the excitement that often goes with it. On Good Friday the focus switched to uncertainty, anguish, and fear. On Easter we change our focus to one of love, joy and thankfulness. We've lived through the time of pain, doubt and loss and come out of it weakened but not defeated. We've managed to hang on until we can find new ways to live, to breathe, and to exist.

After experiencing any sort of celebratory event only to have it turn into something just the opposite, it is only understandable that we would begin to doubt that good times are ahead and that we can trust that things will continue to go well for us and those we care about. But this is why we need Easter and all that it represents!

When Jesus' first disciples lived through the experience of the Palm Sunday celebration only to have it turn into the Good Friday defeat, they desperately needed the Easter resurrection if they were to be able to go on with life with any sort of hope and sense of accomplishment and success. And when Easter broke into their lives, they gained a new lease on life and a new purpose for their own existence. They believed, as did Jesus, that nothing on this earth had enough power over them to defeat them or leave them feeling helpless and hopeless. Their tears of sadness turned into tears of joy.

Is there something in our own lives that is causing us to feel overwhelmed at the present time or something that has happened to us that is leaving us feeling defeated and without purpose? Has something gone terribly wrong? Have we lost something or someone important to us? Is someone we care about deeply experiencing health issues or suffering in some way? Are we in the midst of depression or has something such as PTSD taken its toll

on us? Whatever it might be, the Easter message is that there is good news ahead. The Easter promise is that nothing, absolutely nothing can keep us from the love of God and the reality of the resurrection.

The resurrection is not only a belief in renewed life beyond this physical life we now live but a belief in renewed life while we live on this earth.

When Mary went to the tomb of Jesus on that first Easter morning after his death and burial, she was weeping with sadness, so much so that she did not even recognize Jesus when he appeared to her. She thought he was the gardener. Jesus asked her why she was weeping and as the tears stopped her sight cleared and she knew Jesus for who he was. Instinctively she wants to reach out to take hold of him but he tells her not to do so because he is no longer the same person he once was. The crucified Jesus no longer exists – the resurrected Jesus is the new reality.

This may be a metaphor for all of us that we should let go of the thoughts and attitudes that keep us in bondage to the things of this earth so that we can live in the freedom that can be ours when we begin to think in a new way – a way of thinking that does not include or is not dominated by the Good Friday kind of thinking with the belief that we can never rely or count on continued good things happening for us. The Easter story illustrates for us that we can find good in or despite all situations, even when it seems impossible to do so. For the disciples of Jesus, they discovered this in the ultimate defeat for them – the death of their friend and rabbi or teacher and spiritual mentor. Only a short time ago they had been utterly dejected as they witnessed the death of Jesus but now they were feeling exhilarated and excited as they experienced his resurrection.

While this biblical account of Jesus' death and resurrection takes place in a mere three days, the reality is that for many of us the time between our losses and the grief and despair that may accompany them and our healing and the renewed life that can be ours may take months or years, especially when it comes to the death of a loved family member or dear friend. We simply cannot recover from such a painful experience in three short days, three months or even three years. Healing takes time, and this applies to physical, mental and spiritual healing. And even though time does help, life will never be the same for someone who has lost someone who was such an important part of his or her life.

As we enter the Easter season today, which continues until Pentecost Sunday on May 21st, we will have time and the opportunity to participate in the healing of our communities, our nations, and our world as we do our part to bring this scourge of the coronavirus to an end. Some will do that by getting vaccines, some will do it by other means if they are not comfortable with a vaccination, but we can all work together to create a true Easter sort of resurrection experience this year in ways we have not in previous years and hopefully will not have to in future years. By playing our part in this healing process we will provide an experience unlike any we have been part of before with the renewal of family gatherings with hugs for everyone without fearing that we might pass on the virus to one of our older and more vulnerable family members.

Let's put aside our differences and our frustrations about how best to handle the next few months and work cooperatively to keep as many people as possible safe. Let's do it at the federal, provincial, municipal, neighbourhood and family levels, and make Canada known throughout the world where love of one another is our driving force. The world already has too many examples of countries that are immersed in Good Friday beliefs, attitudes, and ways of living. Let's be an example to the world of a nation filled with resurrection people!
Amen.

