

Sermon for Sunday April 26th

A few years back there was a somewhat popular question out there for Christians to consider. If being a Christian were a crime would there be enough evidence against us to be convicted?

If you are like me my first tendency is to become defensive and begin listing all kinds of actions on my part that would make the top 10 things that Christians do. Yet, the question might be asking less of what I do to justify my Christianity but more so my ability to witness to what Jesus has done in my life. Hmmmm Different answer perhaps. Ahh, maybe it is less about me and more about the power of Christ in my life.

The scriptures once again remind us that the Resurrection event was a transformative event in the life of the early church community. It was not something to sit back and be passive about. No longer could the disciples of Jesus sit back in hiding or in fear. They needed to respond to the grace that was before them and once they were opened they could do nothing but respond by living lives of faithful witness to the Good News and the profound change it would mean to their lives.

We do not equate our Christianity with belonging to the Comfort Club of the Carefree Society. The disciples of Jesus were not provided cushy comfy pillows and told to just sit by and watch the action, rather they were challenged to get out there and spread the Good News even amidst persecution. Should less be asked of us? They were asked to go out there and witness.

As people of the Resurrection, we at times want it both ways. The scriptures remind us however that we can't have it both ways. We can't claim the grace of being children of God and heirs of the kingdom and at the same time cower in fear at each challenge before us.

In Resurrection, as Easter people we move beyond worshiping God as we do idols. No longer are we locked into pre-historic or archaic forms of sacrificial offering. The idolic mantra we continue to hear today is 'What is in this for me?' Our own ends become the idol worshipped. When the object fails to serve our desires then we abandon it and find another idol to replace it.

In contrast iconic worship opens us up to a relationship that is centrally focused on God and not solely on our needs or ourselves. We focus on the love of God for its own sake not in what it can give us. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from this viewpoint is iconic in that it invites all who believe to reflect on God's incredible grace not out of justifying itself based on our limited needs or desires. Iconic worshipers are blessed with God's grace as they have chosen to love God and not their self interests.

This Easter event transforms history and provides the lens from which scripture is to be proclaimed. It transforms the entire tradition and completes salvation history.

Granted we often need comparisons to help us

The thing that comes the closest to what Resurrection feels like is to have received a clean bill of health after being told you have had a terminal illness. When you get home you want to tell everyone you know. Resurrection is like

losing your child in the grocery store and having found him or her safe and sound in the cereal aisle you might rejoice and bring him out for ice cream. Resurrection is like receiving news that your house has sold for way better than the market value? Excited by your windfall you take your family out to dinner. With all of these things we find ourselves in awe at undeserved grace and we cannot help but spread the word.

The Resurrection is **not** some ancient metaphorical story that remains a fairy tale. The Resurrection is **not** a disconnected dusty dogma of the church that pains for relevance. The Resurrection is **not** a mere excuse to celebrate the rite of Spring. The Resurrection is **definitely not** a secret left only for the well healed, the well astute, the well behaved or the well received. Rather the Resurrection is for all of us who gather for healing, who have sinned and seek forgiveness, who have been lost and now have found our way by the wonderful grace of God. Amen Alleluia Amen.