

The Resurrection of our Lord – 2020

Exodus 14:10-15:1

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

John 20:1-18

Blessed Easter to you; a very blessed Easter to the saints of Christ the King. The Lord is risen and life invades this fallen creation. The Lord is risen and Life is the Victor. The Lord is risen and Heaven is your home. The Son of God, who rendered Himself up to the shame of the Holy Cross, has borne your sin and ventured into the shadowy realm of death to break it, to shatter it, to take away its power. He has done it! Death couldn't hold this King; He lives! He is so pure, so holy, so full of majesty and goodness and love – He rises victorious. Fulfilling His ministry, He rises. Transformed, He rises. Bringing life to you, He rises. Glorifying the Father, He rises. Fulfilling the Scripture, He rises. Birthing a new creation, He rises. This is the day of days, the day that the Lord has made. Blessed Easter to the saints of Christ the King.

Today, I'm a Grinch-o-phile. I realize that it's Easter and not Christmas, nonetheless, today, I'm a lover of the Grinch. 'Ol Mr. Grinch wanted to rob the Whos of their Christmas. He takes everything and then waits for their pitiful wailing. It doesn't come, this expected cry of anguish; it doesn't come. Instead, the Whos give voice to their faith, singing a triumphant carol. Mr. Grinch, unbeknownst even to himself, becomes a preacher. "It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags." No one steals Christmas. No one can stop Easter. No one and nothing can diminish this event, this force, this divine happening. No virus, no over-zealous government official, no wet-blanket citizenry who sit at home and demand that everyone else sit at home can stop the world-redeeming Savior from striding out of His tomb and bringing His resurrection to bear on a death laden people.

Easter is here and it towers over our situation – towers! Which is bigger? This corona virus, or the resurrection of the Son of God? God died on the earth. Is that bigger than our current crisis? It wasn't the Whos who came out and sang their song that made Christmas come. *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, it isn't a story of plucky believers who made the best of a bad situation. It's the story of a reality that cannot be diminished and people who recognize it and behave accordingly. It is reality itself that informs us how to behave. Easter is the reality that informs believers how to behave, what to think, a reality that puts every other concern to a smaller position. Easter is bigger than every plague that man has ever faced combined. Easter is bigger than every war man has known, every hurricane and earthquake and Tsunami put together. Death is defeated. Men live and die and are raised again. Easter makes it so. That is remarkable! You cannot get more remarkable than the crucified Son of God emerging from His tomb – bringing forgiveness, life and salvation in His resurrected flesh. That is the reality of this day. That is the reality that brings Christians to their knees to sing a song of such elation that it makes their hearts explode.

Two years ago, I had the congregation laughing. It's such a kick to hear the congregation laugh; I love it. Two years ago, today, on Easter y'all watching at home were laughing here in church. It was a bit of a wry laugh, finding humor in something absurd. The American Academy of Pediatrics had promoted an article about the beach with some overly protective guidelines. "Studies show that children playing in the sand are more likely to become ill than children

merely walking on it. The risk of illness increases with digging in the sand, being ‘buried’ in it, and digging in wet sand. Discourage children from lying directly on the sand.” And a parenting magazine at the same time said this about playgrounds: “Walk away if you see cement, dirt, grass, or asphalt. These surfaces are linked to head injuries.” Those lines aren’t as funny in 2020. Those lines aren’t as funny in an age of near universal masks, ubiquitous hand sanitizer and antiseptic wipes flying off the shelves. Because of all this, your spirit has suffered. Surely you recognize it, in the last two months your spirit has suffered. You are not as buoyant. A looming dread has crept into your heart.

It’s time for a different dance partner. Easter; dance with Easter for a while. Easter is a very good dance partner. If the news of the day has given you clumsy boots, heavy with fear and apprehension, Easter lifts you on your toes, focusing your heart on beautiful things. Your Lord has performed the most loving service, sacrificing His life to save you from death, to ensure that you and He will never be parted. He willingly became the human receptacle of all things evil, all things despicable and gross. And then, He endured the punishment that sin deserves. He bore your sin that He may dance in heaven with you. Dance with Easter for a while. Let the resurrection be your dance partner. Easter works all things together for good – your good, your neighbor’s good. Easter breathes into you a love that will never be taken away. Easter tells you who you are – what living in this world is to be. You are prized and God’s pierced flesh is the emblem of eternal life. The cross bespeaks a love that you can call upon day after day after day. People who dance with Easter sing songs like this: “Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes; Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies. Heav’n’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee; In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

Peter was dancing with the Incarnate Son of God atop the waves of the sea. “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water” (Matthew 14:28). The simple yet authoritative command made all things possible. Come. And Peter danced. Only Christ filled Peter’s eyes and he danced on that water. As light as air, Peter danced. Till his problems grew large in his eyes. He was walking on the water, with God commanding him to do it, with God standing just feet away, dancing on the water by the strength of the One who created heaven and earth. And he gave the waves too great a place in his mind. Peter thought the wind had more power than the One he danced with. Is that you? Where are your eyes? Who or what are you dancing with? How’s that working out for you? Do you not think that the Lord calls you to fix your eyes on Him every day that you walk out your door?

Christianity is built for this hour in which we are living. Christians are historically literate. We know what this world has been through. We see the hand of God on the canvas of history and we know that He works all things together for good. Is this a time to be brave?

Most of you know what it is to shop for something, not frivolous purchases but necessities, staples, the basics. You look in the pantry and make a list, on paper or in your head, and you venture off to the store. You shop for what you don’t have. You shop for what you need. Now’s the perfect time to examine the pantry of your soul. Easter is the storehouse for Christian virtue. Christ’s resurrection is a bumper crop for bravery, love, mercy, and hope. Peter ran to that tomb and the emptiness of it began to fill his heart to the full. Alive! The Lord was Alive! Those men, those disciples, those beleaguered women and all their sorrow – they found Easter to

be the source of truth, and courage, and hope and joy – Jesus accomplished all that He said! His teaching danced in their minds. His promises shined with God’s glory in their hearts. Their lives were reconfigured, no problem was left unaddressed by His resurrection. No life was left untouched by His sacrifice. No tomb was left uninvaded by Jesus once-for-all triumph. He lives. You are a son of the resurrection. You are a believer in the world’s reigning King – all He has is yours. You are a daughter of the resurrection. His life is in you and you dance with the Savior of the world. He fills the pantry of your soul. What you need, He provides. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Easter has come. Nothing can stop it. We are swept up in its joy. The Father accepted the Son’s sacrifice for it was perfect. Jesus had the authority to lay down His life and He had the authority to take it up again. It is finished, completed, never ever to be undone. There is a time for everything. Easter has come and it is time to dance; it is time to sing.