

Easter Sunday

April 9, 2023

Happy Easter everyone. Alleluia! It feels good to be able to say that again. And it brings me so much joy to gather with all of you this holy day to **celebrate God's great love for us**, a love that is so far beyond our understanding. Alleluia! We know the story well. We've celebrated it and contemplated it and heard it many times before - and yet it still **has the power to amaze**. What a story! What a gift! What a God we have!

But what if we didn't really know this story, or hadn't ever heard it? Or what if we knew it, but didn't really accept it, embrace it, **believe it**? What then? Would things be different? Or more importantly

Would **WE** be different?

I sure hope so. As you know, many of us (for the most part) **don't really like change**. We often like things to **remain exactly the same**. We like the comfort and security that comes with routine, that comes with tomorrow not being much **different from today**. And yet, that is the exact **opposite** of what today is all about, for the promise of Easter has nothing to do with "business as usual", it has nothing to do with "same old, same old", has nothing to do with the status quo.

Rather, Easter is all about allowing the incredible, saving act of Jesus - the power of the Resurrection - change absolutely everything. Change the way we **see the world**. Change the way we **see God**. Change the way we **see each other**.

And believing that takes real faith.

The kind of faith that . . .

allows us to be **hopeful** in the face of disappointment and sorrow;
inspires us to meet the **needs of others** before our own needs;
moves us to **give** without counting the cost, without wanting or requiring there to be something in it for us; helps us see others not as "other" but as **children of God** - worthy of love and respect;
enables us to **forgive** the seemingly unforgivable.

And it's the kind of faith that makes us want to **be more than we were yesterday**.

That's the newness of life promised to us and won for us through the cross, a new way of being that can only come about when **we open ourselves to God's grace**, open ourselves to every good thing God wants for us and from us.

In other words, the miracle of Easter isn't simply something we **remember**, something we think about that happened long ago. Easter is also about **what's possible in this very time and place**, what's possible in every human heart. It's both a celebrating of the resurrection of Jesus and believing that same resurrection **can take place in each of us**, a rising to a new reality, a new possibility, a new way of seeing, and thinking, and acting.

The big question is, are we ready? Are we willing?

I don't mean to suggest that a faith-filled life is an **easy** one. Nor do I mean to suggest that being open to God's grace assures us that **all our problems will go away**, or that sorrow will never find us, or that sin will disappear from our lives. That's not the promise of the cross, nor is it the promise of the resurrection.

Rather, the promise of this day is that none of those things win, none of those things get to have ultimate power let alone the last say over us or for us. They are in actuality simply **Good Fridays** waiting to be **transformed into Easters**, simply moments of dying that God can use to bring about a rising to something more beautiful, something more meaningful, something and someone **embodying a fullness of life we have never experienced before**.

That's what awaits us when we put our trust in God, our hopes in God, our lives in God's hands. It's not a stretch to say that the **heaven we long for**, the heaven won for us by Jesus, is not something we need only experience down the road, only when our earthly lives have ended.

It begins now, and continues **into eternity**.

What a God we have!

And so my dear friends in Christ, let's put aside the temptation to **want things to remain the same**. Rather, let's open ourselves up to the power of Easter, and thereby let God re-create us into the **beautiful people he's always wanted us to be**.

He is risen! **Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**