

April 1, 2018 Easter Sunday Morning

Focus: Resurrection gives us a mission

Scriptures: http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Easter/BEasterPrin_RCL.html (Acts, Corinthians, and Mark read today)

You might know that most preachers stress about Easter Sunday's sermon. We want to touch you with stories, truth bomb you, and change your life with our words. Sometimes, I have made unusual choices on Easter hoping to be shockingly original or deeply spiritual. I won't tell you what year, but I spent one Easter trying to make a wagon wheel the symbol of Easter. I even got the brilliant idea to hand wooden washers to everyone during the sermon, but couldn't find the right kind at Home Depot. If I had handed out washers, there would be evidence of my crime. The sermon 'twas a bomb and not a truth bomb.

Easter is a simple story about Jesus coming back to life, with no simple implications. There was one guy, a bunch of people who got excited about this guy, and few dozen who were utterly devastated when this guy was killed. Three people -- Mary, Mary and Salome were the first to experience the flipping of the script: this guy defeated death and he asked his followers to join him on a mission 70 miles away from the tomb. This new beginning first touched hundreds (Easter season stories in the Gospel); then thousands (in Acts of the Apostles); and now billions. It all started with Resurrection which gives us a mission to share Resurrection in our everyday lives. To practice defeating death, with God's help.

Empty Tomb points to Mission

The whole point of my sermon today is that Resurrection give us a mission to carry Christ in our hearts AND in our bones to every place God sends us. The Sea of Galilee and the towns around it were far away from the tomb. Our Galilees are soccer fields, chemo centers, PTA's, gyms, schools, workplaces, rallies, BART trains, and homeowners' associations.

Resurrection

Some sects of Judaism, particularly the Pharisees, believed in the resurrection of the dead. This conviction was **NOT** about whether we get to go to heaven or not. Resurrection is about getting a *new body* to enjoy when a *new heaven* and *new earth* meet. I know I might already be confusing, so stay with me.

Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead with flesh and bones was an affirmation of God's promise. Starting with Jesus, we have the opportunity to experience God in a very tangible way (like in the Garden of Eden way). But the promise of Easter is that we get to do it with *perfectly whole bodies* while the living breathing Christ is at center of heaven and earth's reunification, Eden 2.0. In these whole bodies, we get to enjoy God fully **WHEN** God makes a new heaven and earth.

New Heaven and Earth

It's not part of the scripture cycle today, but I think it is really important to understand where Easter leads us. Resurrection is the opening salvo for the final act in scripture.

Revelation 21

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The empty tomb sets us up for what God continues to do - making all things new. It's not here yet, but a New Heaven and Earth will be unblemished by human corruption. You might think I am going off the deep end, but this is the trajectory of the Christian story. Christianity is **not** about us floating up to heaven to see Peter playing church music for 50 billion years. If that were the case, I might just turn around. In the future, I hope to enjoy Jesus with my body, and not like some ghost. The Easter flesh-and-blood-destroyer-of-death-Jesus is a biblical promise and lived reality for everything new, clear, and pure.

Empty Tomb

I love the image of the empty tomb, because it does not matter where we are on our faith journey -- wild eyed believers, sophisticated skeptics, or urbane progressives -- the empty tomb is still empty. We can go in, poke around the burial cloths, and draw our own conclusions. We can think resurrection is just a PR move by the disciples to keep the community afloat after Jesus was really dead as a doornail. We can think Resurrection continues to be real today. Wherever we land on the spectrum, Mark tells us that the empty tomb is still empty and that Resurrection keeps things moving toward Galilee eventually leading back to a New Jerusalem. I pray that you can know and live the resurrection life -- for Christ is Risen, the Lord is Risen indeed Alleluia.

