

MODERATOR'S 2024

EASTER MESSAGE



Resurrection Hope

I have been in ministry for 26 years now, and every Easter, I find myself experiencing the same dynamic. I cannot begin to write my Easter Day sermon until I have led/attended the Good Friday service. I need to first go through the Good Friday experience. It is a process of following the story, and not engaging with the resurrection account until after the crucifixion. Without reflecting on the events of Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion, we cannot fully appreciate the joy and significance of the resurrection.

Easter is at the heart of our faith. And the narrative it brings to us – that life is stronger than death, that hope is stronger than despair, that the light is stronger than the darkness – makes us an Easter people. People of the resurrection. That large narrative provides a framework in which we live out our lives.

When we have those times of 'walking through the valley of death', we carry with us a sense of that overarching hope. When we are racked with grief, we have the inherent hope that healing and wholeness will come. And through the cross of Jesus Christ, we have the assurance of coming into deep relationship with God our Creator. There is a reuniting, a reintegration of that which has been torn asunder.

The word salvation comes from the Latin root of *salus* or *salvus*, which can be translated as health. To be whole, to be integrated. Reintegrating, reuniting from what we were estranged from, equipping us for the kind of life our Creator intended us to have.

Resurrection is mystery and promise, reality and hope. The dimension of hope was fundamental to the thinking of the New Testament writers. The suffering of Christ and the suffering Christians were undergoing were the birth pangs of a new age. In Christ, God had begun to move with power. Christian faith was faith in one who had raised Christ from the dead and therefore they could persevere with hope and confidence, joy and expectation.

And that continues to speak to us today. The resurrection event of Easter is not just something we remember as a past event, it is a continuing reality which gives us hope today. We live in a world that is in real need of a sense of hope. Individuals, communities, countries alike. There are many who are feeling disconnected, isolated, overwhelmed with the pressures around them and the polarization of society. The Easter narrative has something important to offer in this space. A word of hope into situations of despair. A promise of reintegration after brokenness. A sense of 'gathering in' as opposed to separating out. Relationship with the Risen Christ who connects with us on this journey of life and holds out the promise of fullness of life. In Christ all things are made new.

This Easter may we all experience afresh the life-giving joy of being people of the resurrection, and may that be something we in turn live out in our communities.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

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