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April 12, 2009
Easter Sunday

"Every Morning is Easter Morning"

Colossians 3:1-4
John 20:1-18

Colossians 3:1-4

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Word of the Lord!

When I was a kid attending church at First Presbyterian Church in Red Bank, New Jersey - torture was best described in two words. Easter. Assembly. Our church services were set up at 9 and 11 and Sunday School took place during the church service.

On Easter Sunday the entire Sunday School would come together and learn just one song over and over and over again until the end when while we were singing it, they would pull up the

curtain on the stage and we would behold the empty tomb...which was actually three pieces of worn out cardboard painted to look like a tomb, a stone and a tree.

The thing was we only sang that one song. They were playing it as we walked in from our Sunday School classes and they spent 40 minutes teaching it to us and then we sang it for real and watched as the cardboard scenery was revealed. Every year. By the time we were in junior high it had become brutal.... so a couple of my friends convinced me that we should try and make things a little more interesting.

It was a harmless plan really. We were just going to hang out in front of the painted tomb and when they opened the curtain there we would be. We hung out in the back of the pack of kids headed down to the assembly and ducked backstage. With over 100 kids filing into the fellowship hall it was easy not to miss us. We basically hung out backstage and laughed about our upcoming prank and tried to decide whether we would do bodybuilder poses or shopping catalog poses. And all the while we were back there talking 'the Easter song' - that had no end - kept on playing over and over and over again.

Every morning is Easter morning from now on. Every day is resurrection day the past is over and gone. Good bye death goodbye pain, good riddance Hello Lord, hello sun! I am one of the Easter people, my new life has begun....Every morning is Easter morning from now on....

The only variation came when right before the curtains were to be opened everybody sang just the "every morning is Easter morning" part until the "tomb" was revealed and then we would all yell "from now on!"

You can see why after twelve years of this we wanted a bit of revenge.

The problem was that while my two cohorts had very lenient parents, I had strict, scary "go-get-the-paddle" parents...so I started to lose my nerve. Of course I didn't totally panic until *Every Morning is Easter Morning* was being sung for real and the curtain was about to be opened. We decided to get the heck out of there and in our hurry we knocked over every piece of cardboard scenery that there was.

I was hopelessly trapped underneath the tombstone, which for painted cardboard was surprisingly heavy, not to mention that is hard to lift anything when you are hopelessly laughing hysterically. The laughing stopped suddenly when we realized that the song was winding down and the curtain was about to be opened. "*Every Morning is Easter Morning, Every Morning is Easter Morning, Every Morning is Easter Morning*"the curtain started to open and we were all absolutely sprawled out on the floor when I decided to take matters into my own hand and I yelled, "One more time!"

----CHOIR SINGS----

It was an Easter Miracle!

There was a pause as the curtain hovered a couple inches off of the ground and then it went back down as the assembly kicked into another round of *Every Morning is Easter Morning* and my friends and I safely made our escape.

Obviously that song has stuck with me. Every morning is Easter morning from now on. Every day is Resurrection day, the past is over and gone.

Did you know that in our tradition every Sunday is considered a celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord...it is really not to be reserved just for this time of year. This is why a lot of denominations celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday. But still the song is saying *every morning is Easter morning*; not just every Sunday morning.

The Lord is risen... Every morning is Easter morning.

We have come together to worship God... Every morning is Easter morning.

The area has been receiving some much needed rain... Every morning is Easter morning.

A woman is assaulted every 30 seconds in this country... Every morning is Easter morning.

Of the world's 5.2 billion people, 1.5 billion of them do not even have the basic necessities of life... Every morning is Easter morning.

In the last few months thousands of people have lost their lives in acts of nature and acts of human violence... Every morning is Easter morning?

Hard to figure isn't it.

James S. Stewart, a colleague of Peter Marshall's, writes, "This broken, warring world is living on the wrong side of Easter Day. That is the basic fact, and the source of all our troubles. We are back where the disciples were, between Good Friday and the Resurrection. Like them, we are groping in the dark. We are on the wrong side of Easter.

We are standing helpless before the towering mystery of evil's tragic dominion, feeling our hopeless inadequacy in the face of the grim facts of sin and chaos and man's ruthless inhumanity to man. We are still fighting the spectres of the night, still searching pathetically for some man-made, humanistic solution to our problems, struggling in the morass of fear and impotence and confusion."

"...The supreme need of the world at this moment is to start living on the other side - the right side - of Easter. It is to know that in the Resurrection of Jesus, God (Himself) has spoken, and God's empire of righteousness and peace and joy and liberty has been brought decisively to light."ⁱ

Every morning is Easter morning...even in our present time of trial and fear and need...
Every morning is Easter morning... even as we stand helpless in the shadow of sin and chaos
and humanity's ruthless violence towards one another...
Every morning is Easter morning.

Listen to the Word of God found in Romans 8:

I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us... What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lordⁱⁱ.

Nothing? *Nothing* separates us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?

No, nothing separates us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
Every morning is Easter morning from now on.

In a good lesson on why you always treat people nice, eight years ago during my very first Good Friday in this Presbytery I did a local mission project with some of the youth from my church at the time and right here at MPC. I still remember driving home from that event and seeing a church sign that said: "If you feel separated from God, guess who moved."

Do we treat every morning like its Easter morning?

Is God at the center of our lives?

When we do a quick review of what we have invested our faith and trust in... is God even on the list, let alone number one?

Do we worship a god created out of our own understanding or do we have room for God as God is, and God as God works.

On this Easter Sunday are we like Mary at the tomb, unable or unwilling to see God for who God truly is?

“On Easter Sunday we celebrate a God who empties tombs. But most of us are like Mary. When we suffer a devastating loss, as Mary suffered in the (torture and death) of Jesus, we cannot imagine God’s capacity to transcend life’s endings. When Mary first discovers that the body of Jesus has disappeared she does not think that God has found a way to bridge the great divide of death. She thinks someone has stolen the body. Even when Jesus comes to stand beside Mary and she talks with him, she does not immediately recognize who it is. She does not recognize Jesus until he calls her name.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Mary has to allow her life and her relationship with Jesus to be redefined. She has to entrust this new meaning to the Risen Lord. Jesus tells her, “*Do not cling to me.*” He is demanding that she let go of her old way of life, her old way of thinking, the old center of her life and open herself up to a new reality. She was the first to find out that every morning is Easter morning.

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you feel separated from God... come back.

Every morning is Easter morning.

 Every morning is Easter morning.

 Every morning is Easter morning...

From now on.

In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ⁱ *Lenten-Easter Sourcebook*. Charles L. Wallis, ed. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961) p. 155.

ⁱⁱ Romans 8:18-23; 31-39.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Lectioary Homiletics*. Volume XIII, Number 4. March 2002, p. 33.