

## **Easter Message, Virtual Service, 4-12-2020**

### **Good morning and happy Easter to all of you!**

I find the Easter stories particularly meaningful this year. That's because we can relate to the disciples and their situation like never before. What's their situation? They are on lock-down, hiding somewhere in the city of Jerusalem and vicinity, afraid to go out, worried - not about a virus they may catch - but Roman officers apprehending and possibly killing them. We know all about the brave women who went to the tomb on Easter morning. They are the heroines of Easter. But part of the truth is, it may have been safer for the women among the disciples to go out into the public. The men were probably more at risk. There was danger out there. And so the guys stayed home, playing puzzles in their quarantined home. Well, something like that... It was a difficult time for them. They were grieving and absorbing the loss of their beloved leader. They were not quite sure what the future would hold. Would they be able to go back to their original lives, their families in the north of the country, in Galilee? Was there a future ministry for them? They had tons more questions than answers!

In other words: many of us can relate to their situation. This pandemic, which for most of us non-experts came out of nowhere, totally unexpected, putting the break on our lives and plans, it has grounded us all. It even brought our normal Easter celebrations to a halt. No big church gatherings and Paschal candle processions today; no Baptisms during the Easter Vigil; no huge Easter brunches in one of the local restaurants; no Easter egg hunts with a hundred excited children. And what about our plans for this year? So far, we have more questions than answers.

So, this is the perfect time for us Christians to remember that a sobering moment of confinement, confusion and even depression was the beginning point of our faith. In one of my past sermons I called Easter the "Big Bang" of the Christian Faith, the event that triggered everything for us. It means: not always are defeats and crises so bad when you look back at them from a safe distance. They may feel bad at the time. They probably are bad for you in many ways, and worrisome. We have been through it, after 9/11, in 2008 and now with this global shutdown.

But, the gospels insist, that particular crisis was the ground zero of our faith. "He has risen," the angel said. Out of nowhere! "He has risen, and so can you!" We could read this story as another supernatural miracle of biblical times. But I suggest we pay more attention to the spiritual metaphor. Which is: when we feel that we have lost our bearings, God rises among us in mysterious ways. And to be honest, I feel that God is doing something in our church at this very time, changing our ways, fueling new ideas, bringing us together. It's a different Easter this year, but perhaps in some ways an even more meaningful Easter!

There is another aspect in these Easter stories that I absolutely love. Following the resurrection, in story after story Jesus breaks through the locked doors and walls of the disciple's holdouts and meets them where they are: in their fear, in their confinement, in their uncertainty, and every single time he says, "Peace be with you!" So, Easter is not exclusively about people braving the fear, finding the empty tomb, "discovering" faith, it is also about the risen Christ finding us where we are - in our confined worlds, in our prisons, in our questions. In that sense, I am confident that our church community will be fine throughout these unusual weeks, because Christ is in your homes, even if your home is a locked-down Nursing Home! Christ knows no quarantine. Hey, even breathes on you! (Don't tell anyone!) Christ is there with you in your own four walls as you re-discover yourself and your family, your partner, your children, and even – from afar – your church and your faith.

Have a blessed Easter!