

As we heard during the Children's Time, for over 2000 years people have exchanged Easter's greeting in most of the world's languages. It bears repeating. Say it now to each other – even on Zoom – in whatever languages you know: *“Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed!” Alleluia.*

Having heard that good news, we might do well to add follow it with, “Now don't forget it!” Because we do forget. I forget! Easter is still true after we eat the eggs and put the baskets away. Our culture's delight in adding play to celebrations of Easter isn't a bad place to start.

I personally happen to love bunnies. The truth is, getting the deep life and death matter of Easter takes time and life experience. We don't grasp the awesome power of Easter until we've gone through our own deep losses. A first encounter with overwhelming can bring Easter home, as if for the first time. The real news is, we grieve, but our grief is not without hope.

Easter begins with the surprise that Good Friday is called good – not as a happy spin on a stark tragedy, but as truth. Good is greater than evil. Life is stronger than death. God has the last word.

I've been pondering with people like Lutheran Theologian Ted Peters – whether we might be cutting Easter short. Might God's choice to raise Jesus from his 1st century tomb be for more than Easter Sunday; for more than 7 weeks of Easter. Easter's 50-days isn't even enough.

I've known Dr. Peters a long time – and he ponders things a bit out there – like UFO's – asking, Who are we to limit God? UFO's aside, there's something to not limiting God by our imagination – including limiting God's ability to bring hope into our 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection shows us God's love for created life. God doesn't buy into our often hopelessness.

Horrible things happen in how humans treat each other, treat earth, sea, sky, and their creatures. God surely sees! But the Bible says, what God sees doesn't stop God from doing a new thing – as God did that first Easter. God re-invests – show up with new life even while we're still focused on losses – like the Marys going to the tomb. They had no imagination for something new.

The thing is, God doesn't stop humans from doing what humans do. But neither do we stop God from being Creative Re-investing Love. The Bible shows God knows how to do resurrection.

Let's ponder for a moment this morning what it might look like to carry expectation of God's creative re-investing love meeting us in our lives. We carry the reality of death with us because death causes grief. Grief is good work. We need to do it. But trusting resurrection is good work too. It reorients our posture. We look forward instead of backward.

Matthew's gospel is loud about the resurrection. It's the one gospel that includes a great earthquake. Did you hear "earthquake" in the reading?

"Early that first day of the week, the two Marys went to the tomb, suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel said, 'Don't be afraid. You look for the crucified one. He has been raised. Go, tell the others.'

They go, with fear and great joy." And Matthew goes on. He says the women don't get far before Jesus himself meets them and repeats the angel's words, "Don't be afraid. Go tell the others I'll meet you in Galilee where you live.

Twice the women hear, *Don't be afraid*. They run. They tell. We've heard. But do we remember?

Faith says resurrection is as real as death. The world's made a billion-dollar business out of death. We invest in death. My husband and I recently invested in a green burial. Death is real. We face it. And! Easter promises that resurrection even more shapes how we live if we let it.

Matthew's gospel gives details the other gospels don't. It says the risen Jesus met the two Marys and they took hold of his feet, worshipping him." What is it you and I take hold of? To what do we cling?

Martin Luther says, "That to which we cling has become our god." Luther watched people worship all kinds of things other than the living God, even though on Easter, they'd, *Christ is risen*.

We gather together to be living reminders to each other that Easter is for more than a day – more than a week of weeks. It's for living forward as people of hope – even in today's challenged world.

My friend and mentor Pastor Gerry assumed his wife Jan, who preceded him in death, would come back to visit him. He just assumed that would happen. But one day not long after her death Gerry sensed Jan was too busy for that. Gerry glimpsed Jan doing God's work now in eternity. She was busy doing good. He didn't know what, but he sensed it. She wasn't focused backward, but forward.

Gerry's response was a new urgency to get on with the work he could do here. He still missed her but was glad for the holy hunch she was happily busy still serving God's purposes.

I'm grateful Gerry shared this with me. Heaven and earth are of one future-focused piece. We say at the Eucharistic: *With angels, archangels and all the company of heaven, we praise God's holy name.*

So I close with a question posed by another Mary, Pulitzer-prize winning poet Mary Oliver. Mary asks, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

The gospel suggests we live fully, without fear, for *Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed. Alleluia.* Say it again in your languages: *Cristo ha resucitado!*

Amen