Easter People

Sermon for Easter Sunday April 20, 2025

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“Alleluia Christ is Risen” yes we love our alleluias. Easter Sunday -full of alleluias and Easter eggs and candy. Have you had your favorite Peep? Or Reese egg? The eggs, the candy, flowers, all remind us of life. Life in its fullest.

Last week, we thought about death. We remembered Jesus’s suffering and death. Today of course we remember his resurrection-his new life.

The two men in dazzling clothes say to the women at the tomb, “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” It seems like a strange question to ask someone standing in a tomb. The women had spices to anoint the body. Of course they were looking for the dead Jesus. The men in dazzling clothes tell the women that Jesus has not died. The women go and tell the men’s words to the eleven and the rest. The women were discarded. The apostles called their story nonsense, idyl talk, crazy. The apostles do come to believe through their own encounters with Jesus.

Through our faith and belief, we encounter Jesus among the living. The key word here is the “living”. Jesus’s life on earth as a man was lived among us. He had one foot here and one foot in God’s kingdom. Jesus lived among the living and the dead. When I say that Jesus lived among the dead, I am referring to those that struggle in this life. Those with limited resources and health issues. Those in this life who live partially dead. Jesus lived among all of us but he also pointed beyond himself to point to another world-another way-the way of life-kingdom life beyond the hardships and cruelty of this world.

Jesus said a few things about that other world-God’s kingdom. He talked a lot about peace. Receiving peace, giving peace, being peacemakers, living in peace, loving peace. He talked about faith and belief. Believing in him, believing in God the Father, believing that through God’s creation, we have enough. Jesus spoke about prayer and how to pray as an act of faith.

Jesus lived out kingdom values through his actions. His actions reflect what was read in the Isaiah passage today. God’s kingdom will be peaceful. God’s kingdom will be full of joy. There will be no weeping or crying or distress. Houses will be built; vineyards will be planted. God’s people will be blessed. Before they call out God will answer them. The wolf and lamb will eat together and none shall hurt or destroy.

These images from Isaiah are far removed from our modern world. Today we must use our imagination to understand and see the world as God intended it to be.

Imagine for a minute this world transformed. Cities and towns would be safe. No one getting robbed or murdered. Children could play without fear of being harmed or abducted. Oceans and lakes would be clean with no toxic plastic. Sea mammals would not ingest toxins and become aggressive and die. There would be no housing shortage. Everyone would have a home. There would be plenty of food for everyone. Gardens would be planted. We would eat clean food that nourishes. There would be no more borders. Different people would live together all over the world. We wouldn’t need to stockpile and control nuclear weapons because God would reign. There would be no fighting for gold or natural resources because all would have enough. Cancer would be gone. Imagine the best for the earth and for all God’s creatures and all God’s people. Imagine goodness and kindness and love infused in everything; relationships, interactions, laws. Does this sound crazy or unbelievable? Yes it does. The women who went to the tomb sounded crazy to the apostles. These things sound crazy in today’s world because we do not live in God’s kingdom fully restored. We have gone so far away from it that we think it is impossible to have a world like the Prophet Isaiah described. But there is another way to live. It is a world where death has lost its grip on us and God’s life takes hold of us. This is the Easter message. A message of hope.

Easter reminds us that we are kingdom people. We do not let fear and cruelty and revenge control us. We strive to respond with joy and hope. We hope and dream and imagine. Jesus started it for us with actions to show the power of the resurrected life to come. Jesus healed and encountered those outside of society to show all would be welcome. He lived peaceably to show that unity and peace took priority over war, division, and violence in his kingdom. Yes the lion and the lamb will eat together.

It takes hope and faith to imagine this. Faith means believing in what we cannot see or what we do not understand. For me that means I must hope and imagine a better world-God’s world and I must try to live the kingdom values for this world to be transformed. We do it in our small part of the world one action, one choice at a time. Our actions align with Jesus’s actions. We model kingdom values when we live like Jesus. Sometimes, right now -we glimpse God’s kingdom when we witness a heroic act or see someone get justice. Sometimes it’s when we help a neighbor or when we are helped. God’s world does not revolve around power and greed. It revolves around people and relationships. This is the meaning of Easter -to imagine and to know that Jesus presented us with another way- a glimpse of the world the way God intended it. We must live with hope and joy and a great imagination. We imagine how the world should be and could be. We start small in any way that we can to make that world a reality.

We live with Easter hope. We live with Easter imagination. We live with Easter joy. Happy Easter!!!