

“We Live in God and God Lives in Us”

John 20: 1-18; 1 John 4: 7-17a

I originally did not have the Easter story down as our Scripture for this Sunday. I had the 1 John text that is still listed in everyone's bulletin, a great text but it is no Easter morning text.

That being said, all week, I realized something wasn't quite right when it came to sermon prep things. Now my first thoughts didn't immediately go to worrying about the Scripture for this Sunday. I thought it was something else. Maybe my lack of sermon inspiration had to do with the Blood Moon this week or maybe because it was Holy Week, and I was feeling the pressure to preach the best sermon of all time. Or maybe it could have been as simple as the weather wasn't cooperating with its teasers of spring followed up by snow but all week, I know something was out of place.

And then finally it came to me. We weren't planning on reading the Easter story this morning! How could we celebrate Easter without hearing the Easter story?! It would be like having Christmas without mentioning the baby Jesus, shepherds or the manger. It would be like having a peanut butter and jelly

sandwich without the jelly. It would be like having May flowers without April showers.

Finally it hit me, if we are going to be celebrating Easter, then we had better be reading the Easter story. Well, as you can see, I did some revising and added the Easter story as one of our text this morning!

Now, I realized that this was only part of the problem that was bugging me. I realized on Easter morning, we need to hear the Easter story but is this the only day we need to hear this story? What about all the other days we need to experience the resurrection in our lives? What about all the other days we need to experience gift of hope and new life? Is the resurrection only good for one day or does it hold meaning for the other days of lives?

These questions go to the very heart of our search for God, to the basic need that is our hunger for God, a hunger that needs to be satisfied in our lives as people of faith. These are things we wonder and worry about as people of faith. We need to know our God will be there for us, not just for one day, but for all of our days. We need to know that our God is still working in this world. We still need to know that there are no limits to what God will do to be with us, to show us God's love and grace, to show us that the darkness will not overcome the light.

Well, knowing our search, knowing our hunger that we have to know our God is one of the reasons I picked the other text. It says it all. We can live each and every day as people of God, satisfied and made whole because we know God lives in us and we live in God. It is the love of God that reminds us that God is in control, that hope and new life fill our lives with limitless possibilities. But the 1 John text doesn't stand alone. It builds on the experience of the resurrection to show us just how much God loves us.

Or let me say it another way: I love the Easter story! And I never get tired of hearing it. It is a story of hope. It is a story of grace. It is a story that tells us God wins. This Easter story is our story as people of faith. It is the very foundation of our faith. We proclaim to be people of the resurrection for the simple fact: We worship a risen Savior, who overcame death and brought forth new life for all of God's children. And no one gets tired of hearing about that. But we live our lives, separating the experience of the resurrection from our everyday existence.

Our challenge as people of faith is that we limit Easter. We limit the resurrection to just one day a year. We only tell this story one day a year. We come to church on Easter morning and we know we are going to hear about the empty tomb. It would seem odd to come to church in let's say July and hear the Easter story. We would assume the preacher has lost her mind.

It would be out of sorts to hear the Easter story any other day but Easter. But my question to everyone is why? Why can't we tell the Easter story in July? Why can't we tell the Easter story in December? Why can't we tell the Easter story every day? Why do we have to limit Easter to just one day?

Easter is more than one day; more than one season. Easter should be the way we live our lives all the time as people of faith. Resurrections moments happen each and every day if we would only open our hearts, only open our eyes to experience them. God is constantly telling us the darkness did not and will not overcome the light. God is constantly telling us that God loves us more than we could ever imagine. God is constantly telling us that God is present with us. But from some reason, we think this bit of life-changing news should be limited to one day.

Now, I'm sure there are a number of reasons for this but the only one that comes to mind is the simple fact, we as humans like things to be black and white. We like things to fit in certain boxes. We like things that are labeled. We like things neat and tidy. We certainly don't like gray areas. Gray areas are complicated. Grey areas might require us to step out of comfort zones or see something from a different perspective. Grey areas require us to be open to possibilities and let's face it, we have enough moments that are unstable and insecure in our lives, who really wants to invite more?

Well, I'm going to let everyone in on a secret. God is found in the grey areas. Yes, our lives are full of contradictions. Yes, our lives are messy and complicated. But that's where we find God. God is found in all the areas of our life: light dark, good bad, hope despair. God is there.

We tend to say life is either or but God comes along, takes one look and says, Nope, life is both: both light and dark, both good and bad, both hope and despair and I'm going to be right there with you every step of the way.

We discover through the telling of the Easter story, that nothing about our faith is ever neat and tidy! It is full of fear. It is full of joy. It is full of wonder. It is full of confusion. Our faith journeys are a whole big mess of emotions all tied up in our experiences with the risen Lord. And there is nothing neat and tidy about that.

Easter morning comes in and shakes up our neat and tidy worlds. It stands things on their head. Everything we thought we knew doesn't work anymore because of the empty tomb. The empty tomb shows us a both and kind of way of being, all grounded in the hope of our God.

Easter changes our world. Easter transforms our world. Easter opens our eyes to see the wonderful life-giving possibilities of the Kingdom of God that is in our midst. Easter reminds us that our God is not a God who is just going to sit back

and let this world win. Easter morning tells us that our God is still actively working in this world.

That's why we love the Easter story so much. It reminds us that God cannot and will not be limited to just one day. It reminds that God cannot and will not be limited even to one season. Our God is always working, Our God is always acting, Our God is always interacting with us each and every day, working to bring about the Kingdom of God for the people of God. That's the real power behind the story. It shakes us up and wakes us up to the fact that Easter is not just a story in our bible, that Easter isn't just about one or two people's experience with the Risen Savior. It is a way of life for us as people of God.

The power behind Easter is that it is about all of our experiences with the Risen Savior. It is about all the many ways we experience the resurrection, the gift of new life in our own every day ordinary lives. Every time we hear the Easter story, we are remind that the resurrection moments in our loves are not limited to one day or one season. The resurrection, the empty tomb is an invitation to a way of being, to a way to live our lives as people of faith. Easter morning becomes a mind-set that guides us our words and interactions with others. Everything we do should be a celebration of Easter morning, even if it is in the middle of July. We are called to celebrate the joy and excitement of Easter at all times. The

resurrection will not be limited to just one day. It needs to become part of our everyday lives.

As people of faith, we are called to live out the hope, the amazing possibilities, the excitement of new life each and every day as people who worship a Risen Savior. We are called to be Easter people at all times.

You see, that's why I think deep down, we want and need to hear the Easter story today: to remind ourselves that each and every day our God is present, that our God is here, leading us, guiding us, loving us, filling us with grace. We need and want to hear the Easter story over and over again because the farther and farther away we get from Easter morning, that message gets lost underneath all the stuff the world throws our way. We forget the hope. We forget the possibilities. We forget the excitement of new life.

So yes, I may have had my reasons for not originally picking the Easter story as our Scripture this morning, but all of these reasons fell away when I came to realization that my job as a preacher is to tell the good news every time I step up into the pulpit, but more importantly my job, my calling, my very reason for being a disciple of Christ is that as a person of faith, is to be excited, to be inspired by the many ways God brings hope into my life. And on this and every day, I am called to tell this world that death does not have the last word, to tell this world that hate

does not have the last word, to tell this world that darkness does not have the last word. I am called to tell this world that God has the last word and that word is a word of hope, a word of grace, and a word of love. My excitement and my calling as a person of faith should not be limited to just one day. It should be my very reason for being each and every day of my life.

Our God is still working to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth and the empty tomb was just the beginning. God is going to keep amazing us and inspiring us with the limitless possibilities of love and grace in our midst. We just have to be ready for them.

As I started thinking about these limitless possibilities of hope and grace in our lives as people of faith, I was reminded that they are already there if I just open my eyes. If I just look around, I am reminded that my God is still working in the world. Each and every time I see my children smile and hear their laughter, I am reminded that God is still working in the world. Each and every time I come to the Lord's Table and break bread with my brothers and sisters in faith, I am reminded that God is still working in the world, when I have experiences like the one I had this past week, when I found myself sitting and having a conversation about how to begin feeding the hungry people of our community fresh produce and getting excited about the ministry potential that is there, I am reminded that God is still working in our world.

each and every time I say to this world, death did not win, darkness did not extinguish the light, that hope was not destroyed.

Now, These are just a few of my resurrection moments. I know that there are more in my life. But these are mine and I know that you have yours as well.

So it is my hope and prayer that we leave this place, rejoicing and celebrating our many experiences with the Risen Savior, not just for today but celebrating them, and sharing them with others each and every day of our lives. Because the love of God, the limitless possibilities of our God cannot and will not be limited to just one day. It will take us a lifetime to experience them all.

People of God, hear the good news: God is actively working in our world each and every day. And God is waiting for us to join in because let's face it, the only way this world is ever going to know that God wins each and every time, is if we start living our lives that way. Thanks be to God! Amen.

