

Easter 2020

Gracious God may these words be your words of Grace and resurrection Joy. Amen

I love to watch The Vicar of Dibley. It is about a clergywoman in a very small town. Her first Easter everyone in town was talking about the Easter Bunny. She was so perplexed. "You know the Easter Bunny is really real," she would tell folks. Their reply would be- "Of course there is an Easter Bunny! We have seen it. It comes out in the early, early dawn to deliver Easter Eggs to all the children in the town." "But you know the Easter Bunny doesn't really exist, right? ". During Lent, one of their most beloved matriarchs died. Before she died, she called people to her room one by one to have private conversations - There was the Mayor who wanted everything his way. But he loved her dearly. The shepherd who got along better with animals than people. but he adored her... the church secretary who exuded love but had no common sense. and then the vicar. When the matriarch called the Vicar in, she said, "I have a secret. I am the Easter Bunny! I have been giving eggs to the children all my life. This tradition cannot end with me. I have chosen you to be the new Easter Bunny. Please keep it a secret." Well the Vicar was astounded. She didn't even believe in the Easter Bunny and now she WAS the Easter Bunny. She spent days planning. On Easter morning, just as the sun was rising, she put on her huge pink bunny outfit with hundreds of eggs to give to the children. What she found was other people in the town square: the mayor in a bunny suite trying to organize people, the shepherd who was grumpy and confused, the secretary, hopping around like a bunny ... They were dressed in huge bunny outfits, with eggs. The Matriarch had asked them all to be the Easter Bunny! The miracle of Easter is that even out of death, love multiplies. Love has a strength that is eternal.

This year, I feel like a lot is missing. "No Easter this year." I keep on hearing. But Easter is much more than a day. It is a celebration of hope, of rising out of darkness into the dawn. **It is a lifestyle of love that is braver and bolder than any violence and endings. It is victory even in the most desperate of times.**

I remind you again that Anne Lamott says, "Hope begins in the dark- the stubborn hope that if you show up the dawn will eventually come. "

Our Easter story from Matthew begins in the darkness. When the sun had barely begun its rising, when it was still tucked behind the horizon, and the delicate glow that promised its rising, both Marys' began their journey to Jesus' tomb. They had had had their hearts knocked out of them. They walked slowly and carefully, heavy with grief. The last couple of days had been grueling. But, their dear friend, their dear rabbi deserved to be buried properly. They had no idea how they were going to get past the guards. They had no idea how they were going to roll the stone away from the cave where he was buried. But as they got closer to the burial site, the earth began to shake. They held onto each other for dear life. The guards were so scared, they fell on the ground. The boulder was rolled away from the grave by an angel. Shaking, and wiping themselves off, the women went to the cave. There sitting on the boulder was an angel. He shined so powerfully; they could barely see. Now folks didn't see angels often. In fact, one of the last times we heard from angels in the Gospels was when Jesus was born. They had lit up the night sky and sang with joy that filled the earth. They also met Jesus, alone, in the wilderness. They carried sacred messages to the earth. But what was this angel doing here? HERE OF

ALL PLACES? What was the message this angel had? The angel told them to **not be afraid**. This was the same message that the angel gave the shepherds when Jesus was born. This message was going to be something big. Then the angel told them that **Jesus had risen!** To go to Galilee” He was alive!!! The women hugged each other, tears streaming down their faces. This day was like none other. Their joy burst open. New LIFE. HE was alive!!!

They rushed like crazy to tell the others so that they could find Jesus. But, before they could get very far, Jesus meets them on the road. And they are astounding and full of fear and joy.

It is resurrection day. And there are three things I would like us to ponder

1. **Miracles happen when we are not looking.** In the darkness, even before dawn, Jesus had risen. He had taken off his burial clothes, looked at his wounds and had a cup of coffee. He had walked in the garden and heard the bird’s sing even before the women had arrived. It is with faith that we too realize that God brings miracles in the darkest of time. Sometimes we don’t see it. Sometimes we miss it. But, when it happens, what joy! We will never totally understand the power of God’s love. **But we will discover it and sing alleluia in shocking joy.** The story of the butterfly is more powerful that we realize. You see when the caterpillar disappears into the cocoon, there is the chemical thing that happens that the body is basically dissolved. It becomes a gooey mess. And then something beautiful happens. Out of this mess of goo a beautiful butterfly is born. When our lives seem like no more than a gooey mess, the Christ comes to us, alive and gives us a new life of beauty and celebration. We are transformed by God’s love.
- 2 During faith quakes, we are shaken, our legs are wobbly, and we are not sure what they expect next, we have messengers whispering to us, “Be not afraid.” Fear is a natural emotion. The women that day, held both fear and joy. **Their fear did not paralyze them because their joy propelled them** into a place of hope and alleluias. It was with the courage of joy that they heard the good news. Let us always know that Joy gives us the power to hear the true of hope of God’s love and is more powerful than any dead ends in our lives.
- 3 Jesus met them on the road. Jesus, the living Jesus meets us unexpectedly on the road. And we are surprised. Resurrection surprises us. When we think that it is all over, Jesus shows up to give us new life, new grace, new love, new direction. No matter what road we are on, Jesus shows up to tell us he is alive. And he hands us **stubborn hope, durable love, never ending grace.** The dawn comes to us and we find new life.

Alleluia.