

Wesley United Methodist Church

April 21, 2019

“I Have Seen the Lord.”

John 20:1-18

Easter is all about a four letter word—and Christians are full of it. Or at least we’re supposed to be full of it. The four-letter word is LIFE. New Life. Abundant Life. Redeemed Life. Resurrected Life.

The purpose of life is not death, Easter says. The purpose of life is life...a life that triumphs over death forever. Celebrating Easter is the best that the church can do because it is a celebration of all that is good, all that is true, and all that is beautiful. I would like to make the case this morning that celebrating Easter is the greatest public service the church can perform for the world. Why? Because it is the reality of Easter that makes everything else we would do possible.

Remember Jesus’ final words on the cross? “It is finished.” When the soldier stabbed him with a spear point, “blood and water came out” (John 19:34). That rush of fluids revealed what was the actual final cause of death for Jesus—a burst aorta. Jesus died of a broken heart. The breaking of Jesus’ heart was what finished Jesus’ sacrifice. On Easter morning the great surprise is that sacrifice was not the end of Jesus’ mission. On Easter “It is finished” becomes “Now it begins.”

Life begins anew with the resurrected rhythms of that Easter heart. It is an Easter heart that the resurrected Jesus offered to all who believed in him, all who read the signs and symbols of new life God had left at the empty tomb. The “beloved disciple” looked in at the abandoned grave clothes and “believed that Jesus had risen. At that instant his Easter heart started beating.

Mary Magdalene heard her name called with her beloved Teacher’s own voice, and she saw and believed that the risen Lord stood before her. It was at that moment Mary’s Easter heart started beating.

When Jesus walked and talked along the Emmaus road with two of his disciples Jesus was practicing heart massage. His disciples later recalled “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road” (Luke 24:32). But only after Jesus blessed and broke the bread did those disciples suddenly see and believe. It was the final jolt that jump-started their Easter hearts.

Is this church full this morning with people whose heart are full of Easter? Do you have an Easter heart? Here are some ways you can tell.

An Easter heart is full of new life. An Easter heart is full of a new mission. An Easter heart is full of new possibilities. Just ask the young ladies who professed their faith this morning through Holy Baptism and Confirmation. Their Easter hearts are full of new life. It is up to you now, to nurture their new life hearts.

An Easter heart church throws off the old grave clothes. Have we shred our shrouds? Death shrouds separate the dead from the living. Instead of wrapping ourselves in costly, starchy grave clothes, a church full of Easter hearts wears blue jeans. An Easter heart church is a blue jeans church. It lives its faith in everyday, working day clothes; clothes that are tough and sturdy and made to get dirty. In fact, jeans get softer and better the more they are worn and washed. The best jeans of all are ripped at the knee, and the blue is creased and whitened by years of use.

An Easter heart church is full of rock-rollers. I didn’t say rock and rollers...I did say Rock-Rollers. The first sign of the resurrection, as noted by Mary Magdalene, was that the rock had rolled away from the tomb’s entrance. Every body, even Jesus’ resurrected body, needs to be offered a way out. Rock -rollers offer ways out to all sorts of people, trapped in all kinds of tombs.

Strengthened by an Easter heart we can roll away despair and share a path of hope. We can roll away delusions—delusions like “If I was rich I’d be happy,” delusions like “All I need is one more drink, or smoke, or hit...” delusions like “The next promotion will get me everything I want.” Rock-rolling isn’t a one-person job. It takes a community of Easter hearts to get those rocks rolling in the right direction.

An Easter heart church is always experiencing adrenaline surges, always skipping beats, always a racing pulse. In an Easter heart church the unexpected is always happening. Resurrection happens. Miracles happen. Truth happens. Goodness happens. Jesus happens.

An Easter church is filled with laughter. The resurrection is a testimony to the words, “he who laughs last laughs best.” The Sanhedrin thought they had the last laugh. The Roman authorities thought they had the last laugh. The cruel crowds and sadistic soldiers thought they had the last laugh. But the resurrection proved God has the last laugh. Those who thought they had triumphed over Jesus were soundly defeated.

The promise of Easter Sunday is not that your heart won’t break. In fact, the promise of Easter Sunday is that if you love, your heart will break. For God so loved the world, God’s heart broke. The cross is the symbol of God’s broken

heart. A broken heart is the price of love. Anyone who has children, you know that your heart will break. The price of love is suffering. The price of love is a broken heart.

Mary Magdalene's heart was broken when she couldn't find the body of her Lord. However, that changed and her heart was full of life when she shared the good news with the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"