

I always feel a certain pressure on Easter.

The pressure is to create such a moving and inspiring worship service, that all of you will be back on the Sunday **after** Easter, and the Sunday after that.

It is not so much that I want to impress you, but to bless you, and help you know that hope is eternal, life is immortal, and no matter what you are going through right now, everything will be alright.

Several weeks ago I tried to recall what I said on Easter last year. I couldn't! I did recall that Easter was cold and as early as it could ever be on March 23, but without looking at my files, I could not remember what I said.

And a year from now, I probably won't remember what I said today, either.

So maybe Easter is not really about me!

Maybe it is about something much bigger than all of us.

Easter is not so much an **event** as an **experience**, not so much a **day** but a **promise**

Annie Dillard wrote: "*Easter is our mother, nestling us tenderly in her arms, humming to us her beautiful Spring melodies and whispering that all is well, all is well, all is well. We have nothing to fear.*"

We have nothing to fear—not even death.

A group of friends were eating lunch together one day, when one of them said: "You know we are all going to die eventually. What do you think people will say about you at your funeral?" The first man says, "I hope people will look at me laying there and say, 'He was generous and good, and his life really made a difference.'"

The second man says, "I hope people will look at me and say, 'He was a wonderful husband and father.'"

The third man says, "Not me. I hope people will look laying there so peacefully and say, 'Look, he's still breathing!'"

We would all like that, wouldn't we?

No matter when it happens, death always comes too soon and you are never fully prepared for it.

Now those who were closest to Jesus were certainly **not** prepared for his death, but even less prepared for his resurrection.

Even those first hand witnesses of the resurrection had trouble accepting it
 When Mary Magdalene came to the empty tomb, her first thought was that
 somebody had stolen the body.

The disciples considered initial reports of the resurrection an ‘Idle Tale.’

When Peter saw the tomb he was highly skeptical.

And Thomas refused to believe anything until he could see for himself.

For many years the early church struggled with the resurrection,
 believing at times that it stretched the limits of rational understanding.

It continues to challenge people today, because it defies explanation or proof.

Clumsy human concepts cannot describe the indescribable.

It is not about certainty but mystery,

not about having all the answers, but living into the questions.

It is about trusting a God who is capable of surprises, miracles, and new
 beginnings.

There are so many realities in life that are widely accepted, although invisible.

Scientists tell us that the earth is spinning on its **axis at a speed of over 1,000**
 miles per hour and the earth is soaring **around the sun at a speed of 66,000** miles
 per hour. Can you feel it?

Albert Einstein said that between the time it takes you to clap your hands twice,
 the earth travels **30 miles**. Can you feel it?

When you look at the **human heart**, you will not find love.

When you look at the **human brain**, you will never find ideas.

When you look into an **eye** you will not find vision.

Some things that are indeed real cannot be seen, analyzed or proven.

But that does not mean that they do not exist.

There is much more to this life than what we can see and touch and test and
 analyze.

Well, how does the belief in a spiritual reality help us here and now, especially in
 such challenging times? Since last Easter we have all been through so much.

The world is a very different place than it was one year ago.

I know that some of you have lost jobs and even homes.

You are worried about being able to send your kids to college and outliving your
 resources. Some of you are dealing with serious illness without health insurance.

And now, as if that wasn't enough, we have **Pirates** to worry about.

I have worried about many things over the years, but Pirates were not on my list.

Easter has something to teach us even in times like these.

Easter offers not just a hope for the **future**, but a promise for the **present**.
Easter reminds us that everything changes over time and resurrection is not something that happens only **after death**, but **during life**.

It is into precisely a world like this, a world that seems to have more Good Fridays than Easters, a world littered with crosses of anguish and despair, that we learn **you can crucify love, but you cannot keep it dead an buried.**

You can **destroy hope, but it will not remain destroyed**

No person or situation is beyond transformation or divine grace.
And that divine love and grace is often manifested through people like us.

Now Jesus demonstrated resurrection long before he rose from the dead. It wasn't only in the miracles he performed but in the way he lived and loved. People betrayed him, and he responded by loving them. People denied him, and he responded by loving them. People forsook him and fled, and he responded by loving them; people tortured him and killed him, and he responded by loving them. From the cross he forgave those who put him there. It was a love so abundant and so overwhelming that it simply could not be stopped, even by death. Nothing could extinguish the power of that love.

In his book *The Miracles of the Black Church*, Samuel Feedman says:
“Every time I see a man put down his gun, there is a resurrection goin’ on.
Every time I see someone go back to school, there is a resurrection goin’ on.
Every time I see man cry and hug his son, there’s a resurrection goin’ on.”
Resurrection happens all the time if we have the eyes to see.

I have experienced this power in my own life.

There have been times when I was so overwhelmed, so sad and lost that I did not know what to do, when it was hard to keep going.
Although I help other people, there have been times when I could not help myself. But in time, with perspective, I have experienced the relief and the grace of a God who can take my despair, depression, regret, and transform them into serenity and peace of mind.
That is resurrection.

Of course this church is in the resurrection business, we are always trying to bring the dead back to life. We are here to shine light into the darkness of this world.

Robert Fulgum tells a story about taking a class in Classic Greek Culture from a renowned Greek scholar. At the end of the class the professor asked if there were any final questions. Fulgum raised his hand and asked:

“What is the meaning of life?” Everyone laughed. The professor said that he would be happy to answer that question. He reached in his pocket and took a small mirror out of his billfold and showed the class. He said that he grew up very poor and one day was playing in a junkyard when he found a mirror broken off of a wrecked motorcycle.

He rubbed it on a stone and made it round, and it became his favorite toy.

He loved that mirror because he soon learned that he could make it reflect light into the darkest of places, into holes, caves, closets, under his bed.

He said that when he grew up this mirror became a metaphor for his life.

He learned that although he was not the source of light, he could reflect light in as many dark places as possible, and that became the purpose of his life.

That is the meaning of life for people who call themselves Christian, as well.

We do not have a monopoly on light, and we are not here to judge, condemn, convert, or cajole, but to offer light and love to everyone we meet.

That is resurrection. And it can happen long before we die.

Several years ago we had our nephews Tyler and Jacob living with us.

Jacob was the youngest and at that time his favorite TV show was “Bob the Builder, which came on when he got home from school around 4:00.

So one day there was a “Bob the Builder” marathon on TV and he could hardly stay in his skin he was so excited.

I got him set up in the living room for the “Bob the Builder” marathon, and went into the kitchen to fix dinner, but Jacob kept coming into the kitchen and running outside, and not watching it.

I asked him why he was not watching his favorite show and he said,

“Because Aunt Melly, it’s too good.”

There are some things in life that really are just too good.

Such is **Easter** with its astonishing promise of resurrection **after death** and **during life.**