

“Resurrection Response” Easter 2018 Sermon

Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 4/1/18
At Crossroads United Methodist Church
Waunakee, WI

Scripture:

Matthew 28:1-9

After the Sabbath, as Sunday morning was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake; an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.

The guards were so afraid that they trembled and became like dead men. The angel spoke to the women. “You must not be afraid,” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come here and see the place where he was lying. Go quickly now, and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from death, and now he is going to Galilee ahead of you; there you will see him!’ Remember what I have told you.” So they left the tomb in a hurry, afraid and yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Peace be with you.” They came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. “Do not be afraid,” Jesus said to them. “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures.



I want to take you back about 6 months or so. The air is almost palpable around football season. There is an electricity. Fans are gearing up to cheer on and defend their beloved team. They respond with an outpouring of enthusiasm and are remiss of inhibition. They don't really care how silly they look.

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And what about that reuniting after a long time apart? When we see that person again our joy precedes us.



And how many here remember Beatlemania???? Even John Lennon himself said that the band had become more popular than Jesus!



It was Feb. 27, 1991, at the height of desert storm, that Ruth Dillow received a very sad message from the pentagon. It stated that her son, Clayton Carpenter, Private 1st Class, had stepped on a mine in Kuwait & was dead.

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Ruth Dillow later wrote, “I can’t begin to describe my grief & shock. It was almost more than I could bear. For 3 days I wept. For 3 days I expressed anger & loss. For 3 days people tried to comfort me, to no avail because the loss was too great.”

But 3 days after she received that message, the telephone rang. The voice on the other end said, “Mom, it’s me. I’m alive.” Ruth Dillow said, “I couldn’t believe it at first. But then I recognized his voice, & he really was alive.” the message she had received was all a mistake! She said, “I laughed, I cried, I felt like turning cartwheels, because my son whom I had thought was dead, was really alive.

Can you begin to even begin to even imagine how that felt? Perhaps not, but some who walked the pages of the New Testament would have understood how she felt because they experienced the same emotions themselves.



One day they watched their best friend & teacher being nailed to a cross. They witnessed his pain as he cried out, “I thirst!” They listened as finally he bowed his head & said; “it is finished!” they watched as his limp, cold and bloody body was taken from the cross and buried. All their hopes and dreams were buried with him.

Friday and all day Saturday they mourned, until on “The first day of the week, early in the morning,” they arrived at the tomb and found that the stone had already been rolled away. And an angel there told them, “You’re looking in the wrong place. You’re looking for Jesus among the dead. He is not dead. He is alive. He is risen, just as he said!”

The 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians is the great resurrection chapter of the bible. Paul writes, “I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you... the one you believed in and stood firm on. He also said things like, “If all this were not true, would we be risking our lives every day to proclaim the gospel?”

With those words ringing in our ears, let us consider how *we* respond to the transforming power of the resurrection.

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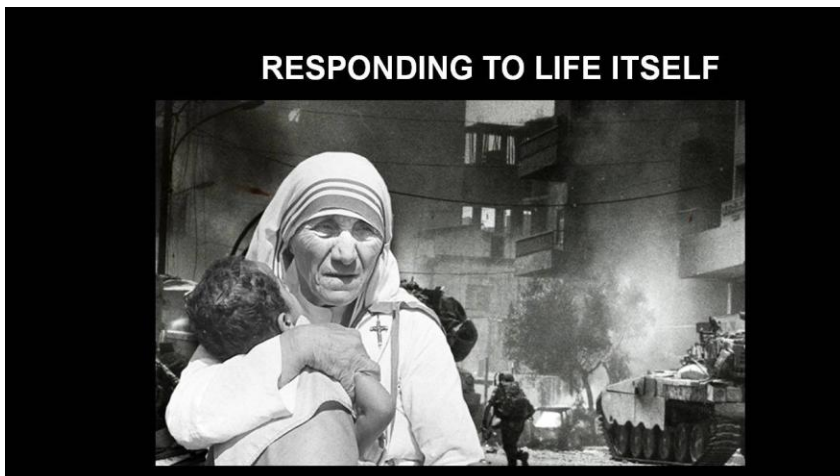
I. Responding to the cross & the tomb

Think about the cross & the tomb. Before his resurrection, the cross was known only as an instrument of horrible death, rough wood soaked with human blood. So terrible was this form of execution that the Roman Empire prohibited the crucifixion of roman citizens. Crucifixion was only for the worst of enemies of the empire and was a particularly humiliating and cruel way to die.

But today, because of his resurrection, we wear a replica of the cross as a piece of jewelry, a thing of beauty. For people all around the world the cross is seen as a symbol of hope, & a reminder of god's love for us. How do we respond to this kind of extreme transformative power? Jesus transforms the horrible into something hopeful.

And what about his tomb? Before the resurrection, for most of the world, the grave was looked upon as the final chapter, the closing of a great door, the end of everything.

But because of his resurrection, we can rejoice today that beyond death is where life really begins, & it will never end.



II. Responding to life itself

Then there is the transformation of life, itself. Have you been listening to the messages of the world lately? Have you been hearing the voices of hopelessness & despair that seem to be so pervasive today?

There is terrorism... there are diseases for which we have no cures. There are problems in the home. Children are being abused. People are sleeping on the streets.

It's easy to become filled with despair. But we have scripture to teach us the way to care for one another.

Jesus said, "I have come to bring you life abundant..., to show you how to live, to bring you hope and joy and peace not peace as the world gives... but the peace that only I can give.

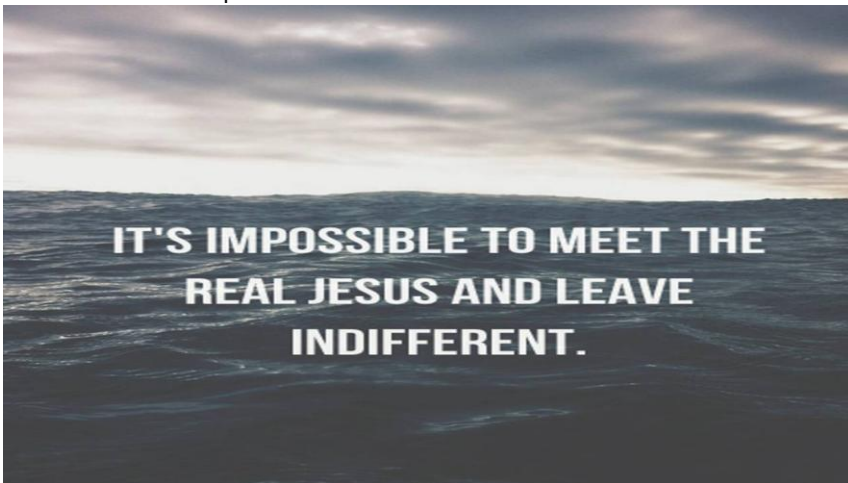
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Even if life is wracked with pain, even if there is loneliness and sorrow, we can find the strength that comes through Jesus and the power of his resurrection. How do we respond to despair being transformed into a wellspring of hope?



III. Responding to death

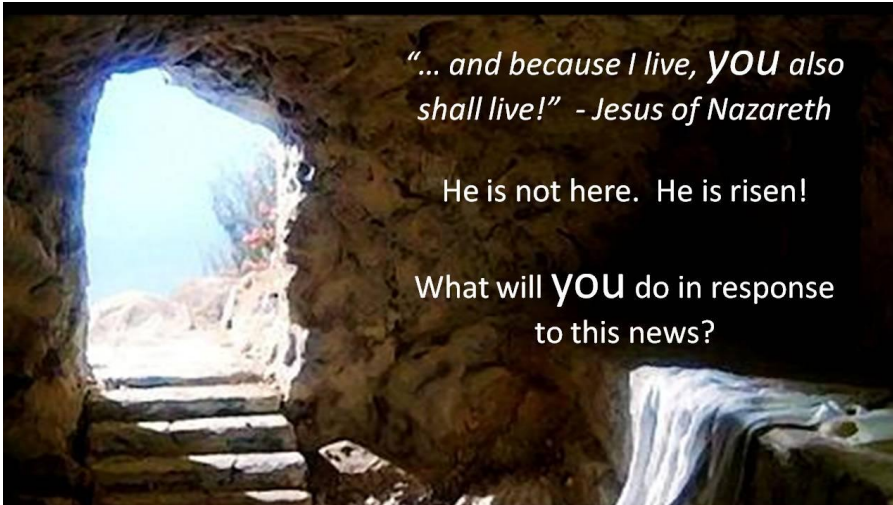
Finally, there is the transformation of death. Before the resurrection, death was the end. Before the resurrection, death was the final curtain call. Before the resurrection, all we could do was mourn as those who have no hope.



How can we know that just because Jesus is eternal, we also will be? Because he told us. He said, I go to prepare a place for you. And... whoever believes in me will never die. Because of what we are celebrating today, “Paul wrote, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” How do we respond to news of eternal life?

Before, life was filled with despair. But now it has purpose & direction & meaning. Before, death was the end. But now it is just the beginning.

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*“... and because I live, **YOU** also shall live!” - Jesus of Nazareth*

He is not here. He is risen!

What will **YOU** do in response to this news?

Doesn't matter how great any packer play is – and even the entertainment isn't free... doesn't matter how great any rock group is... Jesus Christ gives us a gift that no one else can give. How do we respond to that??? It's impossible to meet the real Jesus and leave indifferent. Have you met the real Jesus? He loves you so much that he was willing to throw himself in front of death itself to save you.