

Sermon Easter Yr A John 20
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Happy Easter, everyone! Today is the most joyous day in the world. The male cardinal who lives in my yard has been anticipating this day for a week now. E'ster, e'ster, e'ster, e'ster, e'ster, he sings. (5 times) I've been waking up to that every morning, and going to bed to it every night. His hormones are active. It's spring, and life and the desire to produce life are coursing through his veins. But today he finally got it right!

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because we love life, and the scriptures of Easter confirm life. Life that is not extinguished even by death. Life that continues when it seems to have stopped.

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because of Easter we have the hope, the sure expectation, of seeing our departed loved ones again, as Mary again saw Jesus in today's gospel.

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because we can look forward to having a healed body in our life of new dimension, in the resurrection. I was just doing an Easter Eucharist at Lakewood Manor Care, and let me tell you, the hope of a healed body means so much to the people at that service. We think its neat we will be able to go through walls and then eat a meal, like Jesus did in other parts of the gospels, but the desires of the residents of Lakewood are much more basic: "I want to walk again," a lady said. "I just want to walk again." Jesus' body bore the marks of the wounds, but he was healed of their suffering. So will we be, physically, emotionally, mentally.

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because we don't lose our identity at death: Mary knew Jesus, and Jesus knew Mary. Because love is stronger than death: Mary still loved Jesus, and Jesus still loved Mary.

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because we discovered that in Jesus, we knew what God is like. We didn't have to guess anymore.

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because the forces of chaos, corruption, evil and suffering in this world did not win. It looked like they did, but they didn't. God won. Good won. Love won. The resurrection of Jesus by his Father, our resurrection to come by our Father, is God's "yes" to the world's

“no”. It’s the “yes” of love and peace to the “no” of hate and fear. It’s God’s “yes” to the world and God’s “yes” to you.

Why do we celebrate Easter? Because the good guy won. And so did all the foolish people, the ignorant people, and even the ones who did the horrible harm. “Father, forgive them,” said Jesus the Son, “for they know not what they do.” There is nothing you can have done that hurts God more than the acts of those who killed Jesus. God forgave even them; Easter means God forgives you, too. There is nothing you have done or not done that will keep God from wanting to bless you. Easter means that God wants to be in relationship with you, and wants you to want to be in relationship, too. Note the tender, so very tender way that Jesus greets Mary, and dare to believe that Jesus loves you, too, and that you can feel the same way about Jesus as Mary does, if you just get to know him. It’s not that your actions don’t matter; they do, but their consequences are received in love.

Sound all too fantastic and sugar coated? The resurrection of Jesus changed people’s lives. People who witnessed Jesus resurrected went forth driven to tell the world. They died themselves rather than recant their testimony.

When that male cardinal in my yard began singing his Easter song, he also began to spend the rest of his day flying against his image in my window. He hasn’t been able to break through his own limitation of understanding that keeps him flying against the window, wasting his days, at the very time his mate needs him most. He sees, but he doesn’t see. He sees, but he can’t understand enough to realize that he is trapped in his own limited vision. He sees only what is before him, the mirror image, and he can’t allow himself to see with the eyes of his mind. He is stuck in pure reactivity, not able to break out of his limitedness to dare to believe the larger truth that we can see, but he can’t.

Isn’t it possible that your own limitations of thought and conditioning and vision are keeping you from knowing the God you can’t see with your physical eyes? Isn’t it possible that truth and reality are much larger than you can sense with your 5 senses?

I bet some of you came to church this morning not really wanting to come. It was a good day to come. Mary didn’t want to go to the tomb, either. She had no clue that what she thought impossible was in fact reality, and God was going to come to her and speak to her there in the last place on earth she

wanted to be. At first she didn't even realize it was Jesus talking to her. She was so conditioned and caught up in her limited thinking that she couldn't process what she was really seeing. She didn't even seem to realize right away that the angels were angels. It took Jesus calling her by name before she could break out of her mental box.

Don't be surprised if Jesus calls you by name, maybe today, or maybe another day, out of the blue, straight to you. Don't be surprised.

Mary didn't see the angels until she was bent over. Some of us don't open to God until the worst time of our life, the time that bends us over in pain and we lose our assurance of self sufficiency.

Mary didn't see Jesus until she turned around. Are you going down a path you know is wrong? Or a path that is less than what it could be? Turn around, and you may find yourself face to face with Jesus.

It's Easter. A time when miracles happen. There may be one waiting, for you.