

## Pastor's Note for Easter Sunday, April 8, 2007

### A few Easter lessons I've learned along the way

1. Don't look for the living among the dead
2. Don't be afraid of ghosts
3. Women get up early and are prepared to do what is needed
4. Men run to catch up
5. Getting "There" first doesn't always matter
6. Taking action is a big step toward getting things done
7. Don't keep Good News to yourself
8. It helps to have others with you
9. Testimonies and evidence are not enough if you don't believe
10. Jesus could be standing right in front of you and you wouldn't know it
11. Death isn't the end of life
12. What do you do with a slightly used tomb?

Easter is the happiest day of the Christian year. We celebrate the fullness of life and the joy of forgiveness. Following a hurtful Friday, a soothing Sunday arrives and all the pain disappears. It is almost too good to be true. In fact, for many, it is unbelievable. Unfortunately, even for many Christians, Easter does not have the mystery of Good News. It is a fun day and a time to look pretty. It gives us just one more reason to gather around the table and overeat. While all of that isn't so bad, there really is more to the Highest Holy Day of the year.

There are many and various explanations about Easter. I like to keep it very simple. It is the day Jesus woke up and appeared before his followers. Perhaps, that is too simple and doesn't quite capture the whole story. But, it gets right to the point. After a too brief trial before authorities who occupied Israel and held the people under brutal oppression, Jesus was falsely accused of capital crimes. Although found 'not guilty,' he was sentenced to death and within hours was executed.

Everything that happened to him had been predicted. He tried to prepare his disciples for his demise. They never fully comprehended what he told them. As a result, when the time came for his crucifixion, most of his followers scattered. They feared for their lives. Jesus had said he would be killed but that he would return to life. Even though they had witnessed Jesus bring others back to life, including his dear friend, Lazarus, they were not ready for his Resurrection. Thus, Easter offers a big surprise. He came back to life!

There is much more to this story than life and death. Easter is about what we do with our lives. Finding our own place and significance is the essential purpose of Easter. Can you find new life? Does the resurrected Christ mean something extraordinary to you?

One of the most important lessons I've learned from Easter is there is neither judgment nor condemnation found anywhere in the story. Although, the one who betrayed Jesus committed suicide and Jesus warned, "It would have been better for that one not to have been born," (NRSV) we cannot find any harsh declarations against the accusers, judges or executioners. Instead, we discover the magnanimous gift of divinely human love, mercy, forgiveness and restored life. Jesus demonstrated a capacity to overcome the temptation to hate or hurt those who wanted him dead, and he extended an invitation to Paradise even to a thief. Ultimately, this is what Easter is all about: God's

love for humanity and a desire for all of us to seriously attend to the care of each other and Creation. I am sure there are many more lessons to be found in Easter. As you learn each one, enjoy them, live them, and share them with others. **HAPPY EASTER!**

*-Rev. Art Cribbs*