

CRIBB<S> NOTE – EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2010

HAPPY PASSOVER! HAPPY EASTER!

Holy Week brings together two religious traditions that turn our attention away from our regular routines and toward events that pre-date current critical concerns. Yet, we do not ignore the issues of today; instead, we discover common connections that bridge divides and join us together to resolve difficult dilemmas.

Passover symbolizes the transition from slavery to liberation through the dark night of death and the crisis moment that led to flight. Easter is the joyful surprise of new life after the horrors of an unjustified, state-sponsored execution. This week both events capture us during a time of contemporary challenges and social upheaval. Modern society is rife with unacceptable conditions that tear at our souls and rip open our wretched hearts.

We cannot escape the assaults that make us conscious about the inhumane acts carried out in our names against persons nearby and far away. We still struggle to end slavery and stop the unjust slaughter of innocent human beings. All these many years after events generated this sacred time, we continue to find ourselves locked in a state of conduct that is unbecoming a civilized people.

Passover is commemorated annually among Jews as a reminder of their exodus from a foreign land in which slavery was practiced and the right to worship their God freely and openly was denied. The pain endured over an extended period of time could not ease the brutal conditions of their living arrangements. Only divine intervention provided the source for their salvation and freedom. It took God acting to bring significant change that broke their bondage. The remarkable and unforgettable episodes of challenging the status quo and undermining powerful cartels within the establishment made it possible for history to be directed on a course of new hope.

Easter happens because there is faith in the possibility of change beyond human imagination. As defeat appeared to trump any semblance of triumph, a new order demanded adherence to justice that can only be forged by love and forgiveness. When everything else had failed, submission to God produced unexpected victory and joy. Overwhelming emptiness prevailed along with a tide of unfulfilled exclamations of happiness and peace. Just when it seemed good was conquering evil the dastardly hand of despair appeared and slapped away life's desire to thrive. Death had its way and sucked out breath. It was over!

That is what gives Passover and Easter such great power today. Long past the original events that created this special week of remembrance and celebration, we have something to cling to that bolsters our will and lifts up our human spirit. Knowing God does not reject us or leave us to bear our burdens alone gives us courage to go on against the odds and obstacles of life.

Passover takes us back to a people who found 'a way out of no way' and left their oppression by relying on God. Easter pulls us out of the tomb where hopelessness resides and brings us to the dawn of glory. We start over with confidence that God does not forsake us during moments of profound need.

Jews and Christians find ways of understanding our differences and overcoming our common fears. We realize we are much more than our parochial perspectives and limited rituals. We stand in solidarity with others whose faith traditions are not our own, but we are tied together by the Mystery that is Divine Imagination and Intention.

Today's activities remind us all to observe the living realities of people who suffer and live in want because of human behavior that is oppressive and sinful. We show compassion toward immigrants, the homeless, unemployed, under-insured and uninsured among us; the poor, widows, orphans, mentally ill, and others who do not have access to privileges and rights we often take for granted in our society. We defend children and youth who seek a quality education and we visit people who are hospitalized or incarcerated. These are the marks of the faithful who observe and celebrate Passover and Easter this week.

-Pastor Art Cribbs