

Message Christ is Risen! Alleluia! Easter Sunday, 20 April, 2014

Pray. Father, may news of the resurrection of Christ inspire us to believe, to share, to rejoice. Thank you and again thank you.

Oswald Chambers wrote, "the preaching of the gospel awakens an intense resentment because it must reveal that I am unholy; but it also awakens an intense craving."

Let's watch and listen to the Gospel in 4 minutes, a YouTube presentation that we have permission to use thanks to Dare2Share Ministries.

If the Gospel is God Our Sins Payment Everyone Life, than Easter is the second Big Bang. A bang so big, it was unimaginably loud in heaven – angels and archangels cheering off the decibel scale and yet, in the vacuum of space, the resurrection was utterly silent as a sunrise. Why? God is like that. We are free choose to believe, in the silence of our own hearts, then comes the joy. Wild and beautiful.

So what would it take? What would it take for people to believe? To find faith?

Here's a good idea: Finding Easter eggs on Easter. Bad Idea: Finding Easter eggs on Xmas.

Matthew's account of the empty tomb records something particularly worth discovering. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were the first to receive the news of the risen Lord and to encounter him; they had been there when we died, receiving his last breath and now they receive love's reward; they are the first to know the joy of the resurrection. As we read the story of the first two people in

the world who were confronted with the fact of the empty tomb and the Risen Christ, three shoots of new life spring up. Believe. Share. Rejoice.

1. They were urged to believe. The thing was so staggering that it might seem beyond belief, too good to be true. The angel reminds them of the promise of Jesus, and confronts them with the empty tomb; his every word is a summons to believe. It is still a fact that there are many who feel that the promises of Christ are too good to be true; that is a hesitation, which can only be dispelled by taking Jesus at his word.

Albert McMacon needed someone to drive the truck full of friends going to hear a traveling preacher. The young man who volunteered to drive his truck was going through times of questioning in his life. The preacher's message stirred him to believe that God came to earth in Christ, died for our sins and rose again to give new life to all who would trust in him. The young man came forward to give his life to Christ. The man's name was Billy Graham. It is believed that Billy Graham has preached the Good News of Jesus Christ to more people than anyone, nearly a billion people in person or on television. Have we ever heard of Albert McMacon? No, but both men believed and helped others believe by inviting them. We can invite others too.

**Q.** What kind of music do bunnies like? **A.** Hip Hop.

First shoot of life is to believe, the second is to share.

2. The first witnesses to the resurrection are urged to believe and to share. When they themselves have discovered the fact of the Risen Christ, their first duty is to proclaim it and share it with others. "Go and tell!" is

the first command which comes to the one who has discovered the wonder of Jesus Christ.

The "Go and Tell" command is obeyed in words AND actions. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell heard of young man on Belle Island, Newfoundland, who had blood poisoning. Despite the treacherous ice conditions Dr. Grenfell and his dog team took the short cut across the iceberg-laden bay. It was Easter morning, 1908.

Dr. Wilfred Grenfell is described as muscular Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ, who would put his life at risk to share the good news and bring relief to others. Dr. Grenfell's strengths included his fundraising efforts for health care to the remote outports of Newfoundland and Labrador, matched by his prayerful bedside manner and his courage. That Easter morning, ice conditions worsened dangerously. A fisherman happened to be not far and took him and his dog team on board his boat. The rescue meant the patient's life would be saved. Dr. Grenfell's love of Jesus and his sharing his gifts the Newfoundland people were evident in his 45 years of service to them, neighbours who were very tearful when he retired.

Believe. Share. and finally, rejoice.

3. They are urged to rejoice. The word with which the Risen Christ met the women at the empty tomb was in Aramaic "guwheel", a word of greeting when surprised; meaning "to spin around, be glad, to rejoice" or as we might say "O my heavens!" The person who has met the Risen Lord lives in the joy of His presence from whom nothing can separate them.

I love it when people tell me stories of their faith; it gives me a quiet joy, a kind of Jesus-joy. Is it too good to be true? But who am I to limit God? I welcome stories of Jesus-joy.

Here is one of mine.

Last Monday night, I had to push back several layers of nerves, excitement, love, sadness and grief. I was taking part in the Epic Biblical Storytelling of the Gospel of Mark. One of my bible stories was Jesus telling the disciples to let the little children come to him. I had not chosen this passage originally but was filling in for someone else. The feelings surfaced because in May 1992, my wife Dianne and I had had a son, Andrew, born to us full term but who died 5 days later at Peterboro Hospital of a badly formed heart. His funeral was from St. John's Peterboro, and his casket had sat very near the place where I was to stand and tell the story of Jesus' taking little children in his arms to bless them. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to re-visit the place, and to be part of the creative, life giving and on-going story of Jesus, who still takes little ones up in his arms and blesses them... and us too.

To me, this is my Easter miracle, my Jesus-joy. I'm glad Dianne was there on Monday night and her Mom too.

Believe. Jesus rose from the dead. Share your story with others, in words and actions. Rejoice that someone so powerful can know and love each of us so closely, that there is room for joy once again. Sometimes it takes 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 personal stories, encounters with God's word, circumstances where the gospel awakens in us an intense resentment because it must reveal that I am unholy; but it also awakens an intense craving. God's grace and brilliance might make itself known to melt the heart and make the reasonable leap of faith, logical. God satisfies the hungry heart.

We have to take the first step as though there were no God. It is no use to wait for God to help us. He will not; but immediately we arise to find God is there.

The 3 shoots of life the angel tells the women about, are not fully grown until we invite the Holy Spirit to come. For that great news, we begin a message series starting next Sunday called the Power to Live! What will happen to the men and women who first experience the risen Christ? Return next week to learn more of God's troubling and beautiful message of life in Jesus' name. Amen.