

"Easter Sunday – Coming to Life"

Matthew 28: 1- 10

A colleague of mine visited Elmwood Correctional to visit an inmate. My colleague said he will never forget when one of inmates, gesturing to drab the concrete walls and barred doorways, said- "Easter means that if is Jesus can get out of the tomb he can get in here."

***The Easter story is an odd, unbelievable story by any measure. Most stories are. But the fact that they are odd and unbelievable and can't be proven doesn't mean they aren't true.

Each one of us here will come to terms with the story in our own way. I hope you get it! That's my Easter hope for you! The world needs people who "get" the Easter story, to whom the story makes sense, whether or not it is true to fact.

I would say that the inmate at Elmwood Correctional is one of those who "gets" the story.

To the earliest Christians, the fact – or not – of Jesus' bodily resurrection was not important. What was important was that these "followers of the Way," the Way that Jesus pointed, had experienced, had known the Risen One, the One we call the Christ.

Through the centuries, human beings have taken that story and abused and misused it again and again. Through the centuries, human beings tried to form this story into creeds and into beliefs and into literal understandings. Each age has had its own way of reckoning with the story. In later years, we've made people into church members who have a sense of ownership, but we don't know for sure if they are followers of the Way.

And all along, there have been those who "get" the story, who know for certain that if Jesus can get out of the tomb, he can get in here. Those are the followers of the Way, the ones who have met the Risen Christ in their own lives, who are filled with the hope and the meaning that brings.

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The New York Times has called this time of turmoil in the Middle East, "Arab Spring." As you and I have gathered today to remember the ancient story of the Risen One, people who have already suffered by losing loved ones must suffer again at the hands of their leaders. During this "Arab Spring," the yearning for freedom, for light in the darkness, has touched off rebellion after rebellion in those distant lands. If ever the world needed a light, it is now.

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You and I worried about so much more than the economy these days. We're worried about our futures, about what this un-ending recession will mean for us and the generations that follow us. On this Easter Day, so many are hopeless, hungry, lost, and ready to take any job to put food on their table.

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We have for so long called the United States the richest, most free country in the world. For many, that is true. For others, that has never been true, and the future doesn't look any different to them. We're sending troops to many places in the world today, women and men putting their lives on hold for this country, and at the same time, we don't have the money to give the young people a decent education. I think racism is part of this scenario. Who is it that is hurt by the unending debate in Congress? Who is it that will suffer when there isn't enough money for social programs?

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How certain are you that your health care will hold out as you get older? How good is your health care today? Who gets the best health care in the country? Why do the costs of prescription drugs continue to rise, and why do the drug companies go unchallenged in these debates over what cuts to make?

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We’re all part of the problem. We’re all responsible for all of this. Maybe you’re still looking at the news and thinking it’s “those guys” who are causing all the problems. But we put them there. We are people who have trusted when we shouldn’t have trusted. We’ve put our trust in the wrong places, the places that won’t give us real life. That’s a fact. And when we continue to blame others for the problems, then we haven’t looked closely enough at ourselves.

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Maybe you’ve come to church today looking for something to help you to get on with your life. Maybe you’ve come to church today on the off chance that something you’ve wanted will happen. Maybe you’re grieving – many of us are, grieving so many losses. Maybe you’re here because you come every year on Easter, like a habit. Maybe you’re here because you want some hope for those dark places in your life, the places that won’t go away. Maybe you want to change the world, but you simply don’t know how.

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