

Easter Sunday Sermon 4/12/20  
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Grace and peace to you this Easter Sunday!

It's Easter Sunday and followers of Jesus are huddled up at home. Doors are locked, no one's going outside because they are afraid of what might happen. In the past weeks, the whole world has been turned upside down. People that follow Jesus thought they knew how the world worked—but now everything seems different. The world seems marked by uncertainty and chaos. Where is God in the midst of all of this?

These words could easily describe what many of us have been feeling in recent weeks as Covid-19 has swept across the world, leaving many of us confined to our homes. Even for those that must go out for work, the world can feel chaotic and totally different from the world we were living in a month ago. While these words could apply to us, they actually describe the disciples on that first Easter Morning. Most of the disciples are hunkered down in place. They are afraid to venture out because of what the Romans or Jewish authorities might do to them. A world that once felt ordered and safe with Jesus as the Messiah, now feels completely unfamiliar. Only two of the women venture out to the tomb.

But of course, we wouldn't be here celebrating Easter if Good Friday and a tomb were the end of the story. We're here today because the women found an empty tomb and this empty tomb changes everything.

When we look around us it's easy to see the havoc that sin has wrought on God's good creation! There is evidence of broken relationships and personal hurts in our own lives. And if we're honest we've been hurt and been the ones doing the hurting. And there is evidence too of broken systems that fail to protect some of the most vulnerable in our societies. In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul writes that creation itself is groaning, waiting for God to appear. And hurricanes, earthquakes, and natural disasters certainly feel like creation itself groaning along with us.

And in the past few weeks, we all have experienced a different kind of groaning in creation. This pandemic has left none of us unaffected. Maybe you're feeling nervous because you have job deemed "essential" and you're continuing to work despite fears about catching the virus, or maybe your immuno-compromised or considered "high-risk" and so are staying at home, or maybe it's a struggle to handle homeschool for rowdy kids or grandkids, or maybe you're worried about loved ones in the midst of this pandemic. We all have been reminded that life is out of control and chaotic. Though we do our best with social distancing, washing our hands, and Clorox wipes, we cannot save ourselves. The world is too broken; we cannot fix it all.

And that is why the resurrection matters. Because God knows we cannot fix the mess that all of creation is in all by ourselves—we cannot even fix ourselves. So Jesus came down into our messy world, lived among us, and promised to fix it for us. The resurrection is the proof of God's promise to redeem and restore all things.

For the disciples that first Easter, the resurrection changed everything. They went from being scared and hiding in their homes to preaching the Gospel across the known world, they collected money and gave generously to those in need, and they made sure widows and orphans were fed. They

experienced God's radical love for all people as they preached in new places and to people that would have once been considered outsiders.

And we are invited into this amazing story of God's work in our world—even as we comply with the shelter in place order. We too can give a word of hope to a friend or neighbor in need. Maybe we demonstrate our Easter hope by making masks for medical workers, or by making meals for Family Promise, or by giving generously to the Action Center. Perhaps we are living out our Easter hope just by trying our best to get our kid or grandkid to complete their online lessons and offering encouragement to our child's teacher.

The difficult reality this Easter is that none of us have the emotional space or real capacity to accomplish God's work in the world. And maybe this is one of the gifts that the pandemic is giving us—we are coming to the realization that we cannot save ourselves. We simply cannot make enough phone calls, sew enough masks, or give enough money to fix this all on our own. Resurrection is God's work. God is the one capable of bringing new life right here and right now. And in a world that is as chaotic and uncertain as ours feels right now—this is the good news of Easter. God is acting, God is moving, God is still bringing resurrection in and through you. So when and where you can this Easter season, extend life and hope to others in the name of the resurrected one. But when you can't, know that God is bringing resurrection anyway.

Amen