

Thomas R. Cook  
St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota  
9:00 and 11:15 a.m. Celebrations of Holy Eucharist  
Easter Sunday; April 21, 2019

## “Don't Miss It”

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25 (Easter C, RCL)

*“Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.”*

You know what I want for Easter? I want a world like the world Isaiah describes this morning, a world where things are put right; a world where children don't die and elders live well even in their oldest age; a world that is fair and just, where people don't steal what doesn't belong to them, and where you don't work just so somebody else can get rich; a world where people are decent to one another and we can trust each other, and we need not live constantly in suspicion or anger or fear. But it's even more than that...

I want a deep-seated feeling of happiness in life that resonates from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. I want to be whole and complete and free from worry. I want to remember how I must have felt to be a child cradled safely in my mother's strong and loving arms when I had not a care in the world. I want to rekindle that elation that flowed over me the first time I truly realized that somebody

loved me, and I could love them in return. For me, there's something of Easter in all of that. There's life --- complete, whole, and good. And every so often those feelings are present. I remember them. Do you? Times when you knew something was truly good, that happiness was real, that life was an incredible wonder. Words can't utterly capture those profound moments when goodness is so undeniably apparent. These times are mysterious and deeply profound. And they are also brief.

If the power of death is manifested in this world by brokenness and anger, suspicion and greed, by political divide, violence, illness, and unhappiness, then surely... we are in death, and it would take some kind of miracle to get us out. Well, Happy Easter! Take a look around you. Here is your miracle... on Easter morning. Take a look at the beauty that surrounds us in the flowers and the windows and the lights and sounds and people. Christ is risen from the dead and has drawn us together this morning in hope of overcoming the power of death and our fears and divisions, our anger and unhappiness. So, take it all in. Enjoy it. But be careful. Take care not to miss it. And don't let it go.

*Once upon a time, a man heard of a beach that was covered in rocks, where one of those rocks, just one, would bring you eternal happiness, if you could find it. And you would know which rock it was, because if you held it, it would turn warm in your hand when all the other rocks would just feel*

*cold. So the man sold everything he had to get to that beach where, one by one, he began to pick up the rocks. And time after time he was disappointed, because they were nothing but cold in his hands. And after a few days he realized, "I must be picking up the same rocks." So he devised a plan to test a rock in his hand, and if it was cold, he would throw it far out into the ocean. So for weeks on end, that man would pick up a rock, feel its cold touch, and toss it into the sea. Hundreds of rocks, thousands of rocks. Cold, cold, and cold again. Until one day, he picked up a rock that looked pretty much like all the others. But... it turned warm in his hand! And before he could comprehend the miracle that was occurring, his arm had just sort of automatically tossed the rock out into the sea along with all the others.*

Hey, is everything as you want it to be right now? Are you on this Easter morning where you expected to be along the path of your life's journey? Has it all turned out as you planned? Did you expect to live so long as you have lived? Maybe you expected to marry someone different from the person you married. Is your profession what you thought it would be? Or are you still wondering what you want to be when you grow up? Have your children turned out as you had hoped and planned? Or maybe you planned to have children, but it wasn't to be. Did you think you would be living in Minnesota? Have hardships and challenges, lost jobs or illnesses, broken relationships or departed loved ones been a part of your story?

I know each of you has experienced in your lives disappointment and disillusionment. How do I know? I know because death is good at making that happen; it's what death does best. And death is a part of this life.

But the life of faith in Jesus... Oh, it will set you upon a strange, unknown, perhaps even dangerous and certainly peculiar road. To show up in church on a Sunday morning, maybe especially an Easter Sunday morning, is a risky thing. If you aren't careful, you may find yourself hoping for things that seem impossible, caring for people you hardly know, or believing in things that cannot be. What presented itself to Peter that first Easter morning in his confrontation with an empty tomb, where a dead man should have been but was not, was the incredible proposition that our lives, our often turbulent, awkward, surprising, and sometimes very joyful and sublime lives, are only part of a journey toward that which is imperishable and unfading: Resurrection. Martin Luther King once said that "...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have fit testimony that this earthly life is not the end, that death is just something of a turn in the road... Death is not a period which ends this great sentence of life, but a comma that punctuates it to loftier significance."

So, think for a moment of a time when everything did feel just right, when your elation was real and present. Or think of how good it was when someone

unexpected helped you bear a great loss or a terrible pain. Or think of a time when some relationship that was broken was healed and things were set to right. Think of a time of great joy. These moments, these fleeting moments when goodness and wholeness are apparent to us are become experiences of faith; they are life-giving now, and they speak to the Resurrection of the Dead that is to come. It doesn't matter how brief or fleeting the moment; whether it was long ago or just the other day; whether it was a "really spiritual" experience or it seemed just plain natural. Think on a time when you felt wholly at peace, when things were well and as they should be, even as life with all its challenges, disappointments, and heartaches were spinning on all around you. That is an Easter moment, a resurrection moment, life in the midst of death, and a glimpse of things to come when death is no more.

In moments like that... one *could* live forever.