

Easter Sunrise Meditation: "Forever Good News"

Rev. Josh Fitterling

I want you to take a minute and think about something in your lives, maybe an experience, maybe a pearl of wisdom or a witty story – something that when it happened or when you heard it for the first time, it was the most wonderful thing ever. And then it happened again, and again, and all of a sudden that really exciting thing started to feel a little mundane – a little ordinary. It no longer was filled with the same wonder, joy, awe that it had that very first time. Sure you may still appreciate it, but perhaps in a different way.

When I think of such a thing in my life that was really great and then became rather mundane I think of my grandfather's jokes. He was always good for a joke and he enjoyed sharing humorous stories making those around him laugh. And I will admit, he was indeed a funny, funny guy. And the first time you would hear one of these stories or jokes it would often throw you into a deep belly laugh or the kind of laugh when you are laughing so hard that you can't breathe. I think we all have been there before. But the thing about my grandfather was this – he had a habit of retelling jokes over and over and over again. The first time, it's hilarious, the second time you get a little chuckle, but by the third, fourth, fifth, tenth time, it starts to get a little old, a little stale, it just doesn't have the same appeal anymore. It doesn't hit you in the same way as it once did.

Yet, no matter how many times he told the story or shared the joke, his expectation of your response did not change. He expected, he longed for you to hear it as if it was the very first time that you were hearing it. And I don't think this was an ego thing for him, he didn't need laughter to affirm him, but I believe that this expectation of his was grounded in a desire to share joy. He wanted the people around him to feel delight. That's what he wanted to share, not just the story or the joke, but the happiness that went along with it.

You know, as we gather here today, we are here to listen to the same story again. We hear of the empty tomb again. We hear of tears shed and joy expressed again. Once again, we hear of the Risen Jesus and we celebrate with the same proclamation, with reading the same Scriptures, with singing the same hymns, and we do all of this again. Yet, one thing that I have inherited from my grandfather is an expectation - an expectation that we hear this story, that we sing these hymns, that we shout the proclamation of this day as if we are doing it all for the very first time. Because there is a joy among these truths that we need to hear once more. There is a deep delight in this story that our world needs to experience again. I don't need you to hear it as if you are hearing it for the first time for me, but for all of us. The joy of this day needs to be felt again by us all, to empower us to live our faith, to be the hands and feet of our Risen Savior and to do this holy work with great joy.

So may this day, may this celebration, never become mundane. For what we celebrate today is anything but ordinary. For we celebrate that when day dawned on that third day, that Jesus was not found among the dead but among the living. That the betrayal and desertion and the crucifixion, did not - could not win. That the love of God, which took on flesh in the life of Jesus, is so powerful that death could not hold it. Beloved People of God, I hope that we can all hear these words as if we are hearing them for the first time. Not because I or anyone else needs an ego boost but because this is the joy with which God has blessed us and the world. A joy that forever sustains, forever redeems, forever creates anew within us the glories of resurrection. Because this that we hear and share today is forever good news! And that is why when I say Christ is Risen and you respond Christ is Risen Indeed, I want to hear the joy of this forever good news. I expect a response as if the words are rolling off your lips for the very first time. For Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed. (x2) One more time so that this joy can resonate all over these waters and through this town - Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed! Now may our living, may our serving, may our helping, may our loving, forever proclaim this good news too! So be it and may it be so. Amen.