

Sermon John 21:1a, 15-17 Acts 2:14a, 22-32, 36 I Peter 1:3-9

Acts - The Church Alive - An Awesome God, A Living Lord, More to Come

An Awesome God -

By God's great mercy God has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... Crucified, dead and buried - Done!

A handful of shattered scattered disciples - and - 2,000 years later - in spite of dungeon fire and sword, and a whole lot more - 11 disciples, sinners all, have become more than a third of the worlds' people - an Awesome God.

A living Lord. Those 11, and the 3+ billion Christians now - all say the same simple statement of faith - I believe in Jesus Christ, as my Lord and Savior - crucified, dead and buried and Risen. Though we have not seen him, we love him. He is our living hope. Of more to come - of more to come. For we are, with Jesus Christ, children of God, and if we like Jesus suffer, so too will we, by faith in him, with him know a new life not to be compared with the sufferings of this world. Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory.

Please pray with me.

Lord of this new time in our lives, this Sunday day of celebration of your gift to us of Jesus Christ - Risen. Call us, by your word spoken and heard, to live into the hope that can be ours by faith in your power to bring us too, through life to life, with you. Amen.

From life to life. As David Sorensen tells it, it was just one of those special moments where God seems very present. It was a spring shower - and we might even have Spring here this year. It was one of those showers that produces rainbows. And - as chance - or God - would have it - David was home with his two daughters when it happened.

A spectacular double rainbow. And his oldest daughter, about 6, said, let's go find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. And knowing better, and knowing better not to argue, David got his daughters in the car and chased the rainbow. It looked like it was at the Johnson's house, but then in the next block, it was Smiths, and then, Then it just simply disappeared. And David's daughters were very sad - until the oldest daughter spoke a deeper truth than she could really know. She said, Daddy, I think I know what happened. I think God moved the rainbow because we wanted the gold too much. I think God moved the rainbow because we wanted the gold too much.

It's the Sunday after Easter - and for most preachers - those who don't take this Sunday off - this is a Sunday when we wonder why God keeps moving the rainbows. This Sunday can be like going from a Wedding one week to a funeral the next. The joyous celebration ends too soon.

As a church, and as individuals, it seems in some ways as if this week after Easter is a reliving of Holy Week...

In Holy Week we just came through a kind of re-enactment of the experiences of life. Palm Sunday - the excitement and promise and hope of life, new life. Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. And then... then the events of Holy week unfolded - not unlike moments in our lives, moments of close fellowship, but also the reality of prejudice, and plotting, and squabbling, and betrayal and rejection and suffering and, yes, even death.

And then - for us - because of that first Easter, there is the rainbow of hope. The promise of Easter, of eternal life.

But - that promise of Easter - seems this week for us - and must have seemed then - like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow - moved beyond our reach. A promise - bright - full of hope, - but just out of our reach. Christ was risen, Christ is risen, but still, they lived and we live in a world where all goodness, truth and love has not yet arrived. No pot of golden goodness

For this preacher that's how life sometimes feels, life after Easter, sometimes feels. And I suspect it may feel that way for some of you, too. Easter - the rainbow of promise of the pot of Golden goodness - but we never quite catch up to it... the rainbow keeps moving - no final real living proof for us that all that we believe is true. Life - death - and Resurrection. If only Christ could be among us, with hands and feet and bleeding side to see. And a world turning to his way of truth and love.

We'd like to see some victory signs - not only did love win with an open tomb, but also with a world made new in goodness, kindness and love. For a preacher we'd like to see the crowds of Easter, even larger after Easter. The victory won. And so the pot of gold - of peace, found, of disease ended, of poverty vanquished, of suffering over.

And instead, it almost seems God moves the rainbow of hope - calls us to live by faith, not in the world's goodies but in the goodness of God. Maybe - maybe - because - I wonder - maybe is it because, we do want the pot of gold too much? And we want the giver of the gold too little.

Could it be - out of the mouths of babes - wisdom? I think so, I think so. It's just timing in part - to be sure. Spring Break and folk away. But there is an after Easter syndrome. A bit of a let down. All of Lent- its prayers and worship, its things not so good given up, and other things of faith added to our lives.

And this Easter with all its symbols of new life, from lambs, to Easter bunnies, from Lilies to larger crowds - This Easter - like a rainbow fading - life as usual sets back in - and for us this year the world seemed little changed by Easter.

Flawed and failed political leadership - Spitzer, Kwami, the Governor of Puerto Rico; and political battles turning a bit nasty. Candidates struggling with their memories, and one candidate held responsible for his pastor's every word.

I guess I hope none of you run for public office this next year or so - for your sake. Maybe Connie can erase the tapes....

Even preachers can confuse the pot of gold - earthly goods and goodies, crowded churches and Easter's attendance each week.

But - the pot of gold - the bold hope of a world made wholly new by Easter - that pot seems to have been moved. Though Peter said it was never God's plan in the first place. He put it well, to the early Christian's struggling with their faith in the face of the troubles in their lives.

Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith may be found and you receive the salvation of your souls.

Yes - Easter - Yes. The victory won. Death's defeat. Life and love's win. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. And nothing, nothing, not death, not life, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Yes... and - as Alistair McGrath writes - And still after Easter we live in a world that is like we were living in a country occupied by the Nazis near the end of World War II. Life was hard in that country, those circumstances - unfair, too much pain, too little joy, too much fear, too little faith.

Is it a bit like that for us.... Is it?

But then the news was heard - a battle had been fought and won - the forces of the west had won - the enemy was defeated - and soon the country would be free. Soon - but not yet. Not yet. The Nazi's still ruled.

But - the news was never the less, good, very good. The victory was won, the struggles of the world would not be in vain - every effort for good, every sacrifice, would count. Sin and death had been defeated and would be swallowed up in victory. And the sufferings of the present time would not be compared to the glory and goodness that would soon be revealed.

In many ways, we still live like this - an after Easter victory won but its consequences not yet finished - We know the victory has been won. We have seen and have been part of letting love loose in the world for the good of God's people.

We've been part of the resurrection hope as we've shared our faith in Christ through christ-like works of caring and compassion - You've been part of this hope..

Even while we've sometimes railed against the continuing power of sin, in us and around us - we've known the meaning of forgiveness, of new beginnings in our lives, every new day. And we've seen what love can do in the lives of the people we've sought to serve -

And we've sensed the goodness at the heart of life when we've been on the side of goodness and compassion. We've waited for the great victory of Easter to win its way completely in our world, and in our lives. Hate gone - love won. But we do experience little Easters over and over again. We've seen love win some battles -

Slavery ended, segregation outlawed, systems of care for the poor put in place, equal rights defended - And the times we've chosen to speak the truth, to obey the law - God's law of love - shared our plenty with those with far less -

When we've done these things... we have eastered in our lives - out of our faith in God's promises to us in Jesus Christ, and in Easter....

And we've learned, we are learning, not to chase the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, but to delight in the rain bow - and point to the light of life - the love of God - the Risen Christ. Whose love for us is greater than any gold, and whose will for us is to follow him - and so to know the best in life now - and forever.

Yes - an Awesome God of Love.... A living Lord and Savior - and - More of life's goodness to come - for ever and ever. Amen.

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