



Message

Easter is a paradox. Betrayal coupled with loyalty. Kept promises and broken promises. Hope coupled with hopelessness. Courage and fear. Determination and cowardice. Darkness mingled with light. Life interwoven into death. The grandeur of Palm Sunday descending into the betrayal of Judas and the abandonment of the disciples, deepening into the painful tragedy of the crucifixion, then transforming into the Resurrection discovered by women fresh with grief.

Easter is a paradox and so are we. As the complex unraveling of the story shows us, we humans are capable of betrayal and loyalty, darkness and light, good and evil. We walk that fine line where life and death constantly dance around and through each other.

I found myself thinking of this paradox as I watched one of this nation's potential presidents walk into the minefield of race this week. Nothing can inflame this nation's Achilles Heel more clearly than race. I watched a man speak about race in a way that no presidential candidate has ever spoken about race, and I found myself thinking of Jesus and the unfolding of events from Palm Sunday to Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Not that I would ever want to raise a politician to the level of that prophet, nor do I bring this up to endorse a particular candidate, but that man spoke of race in a new way. He asked us to let go of our pride, let go of our fear, let go of our attachments to self-righteousness, and to truly walk in another's shoes. He asked us to break the stalemate of willful misunderstanding. Whether he becomes president or not, his words were significant and will leave their mark. He let no one off the hook, holding us all accountable, asking us all to step out of the safety of that stalemate. That stalemate allows us to be distracted from the real work of our time, and thus to hold back from truly addressing the real impact of racism on this country and the way it separates us from one another, drawing us into distrust and division.

Jesus lived in a time of distrust and division as well, and he offered a higher path, a way out of the stalemate of his time. Turn the other cheek. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If a man asks you for your coat, give him your cloak. If he asked that you walk one mile with him, walk two. Forgive not seven times, but seventy-times seven. This was absolutely scandalous. In a time when brother turned against brother, when a whole people were in danger of being consumed with rage against their oppressors and turning inward against each other, what he asked was no easier than what we were asked to do this week.

As I watched the media response to that speech, I found myself reflecting on Pontius Pilate, standing on that balcony before a crowd hungry for blood, for somewhere to direct their anger and fear, for some easy distraction that would allow them to self-righteously dismiss the path that Jesus opened for them in his teachings. Rather than walk into new life, the crowd chose to stay within the safety of the known, dysfunctional as it was.

Thinking on what was asked of us this week, what will we choose? What will this nation choose? The path of healing and justice, or the path of blaming, sending on responsibility to anybody but ourselves? What has become clear this week is that some were able to set aside their pride and their judgments and explore the possibilities. Others were not.



What we were offered this week was the possibility of resurrection – where misunderstanding is transformed into understanding, where judgment is transformed into acceptance, where pride is transformed into humility, where the old way is released into a new way, where the spectre of death is transformed into new life. We were offered the possibility to BE the resurrection, to enact the resurrection in our own lives, and in the life of this nation.

The Easter Story is not just the story of one man conquering the grasp of death. It is a larger story that welcomes each one of us in. We are called in so many ways to be the resurrection, for ourselves, for each other, for our children, for our planet. We are surrounded by systems of distrust and division, systems that pull us into spiritual and living deaths. And we are surrounded by the possibilities and promises of new life. No matter how many stand before that balcony calling for the death of an innocent man, no matter if we betray or stray, that promise never goes away. Evil cannot triumph over love. Darkness cannot destroy the light. As surely as spring follows winter, as surely as a man sent from God can rise from the dead in three days, so too can we rise from the large and small deaths of our individual lives, so too can we rise from the large and small deaths of that larger interconnected web of all existence of which we are a part.

The promise of Easter is the promise of new life, the promise of healing and wholeness that never be extinguished. Amen