

Easter Sunday
This Love Trumps Everything!©

John 20:1-18

April 5, 2015

Dr. Sharlyn Gates

A little Easter humor before we get serious. Speaking of Easter Bunnies - What do you call ten rabbits marching backwards?

A receding hareline.

Whew! After a long season of Lent and the dark days of Holy Week, it feels good to have a little laugh, doesn't it? To sing *alleluia* again.

The best part of all is that God has the last laugh. The joke is on death and sin and evil in the world, because with Easter, God's love trumps everything!

For those of you who may not have been able to be here, our theme focus for this year's Lenten Season has been titled *This Love Changes Everything!* Of course, it is God's love through his Son, Jesus, that does the changing – the transforming.

God's love changes our priorities; it changes how we care for others; it changes each day and changes our perspectives in the day. In Jesus' own sacrificial love, it is love that is humble; and it is a love that is very real.

It's all about the love of God that is revealed to us in everything Jesus did – up to and especially including his death on a cross. Paul writes that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Even before we were ever born, Christ went to the cross so that we might be free from our sins and have new life – a life of forgiveness and a right relationship with God.

Okay, but what about this thing called resurrection? What can it mean? Do we dare believe it? And does it make a real difference in our lives over 2000 years later?

Why do you celebrate Easter? Easter is full of fun events – Easter egg hunts, bunny rabbits, chocolate bunnies and eggs, Easter clothes, family gatherings, spring flowers (maybe – or rain).

But why are you here for Easter? When there are all those other things to do on this special day, why are you drawn to this place of worship? Why do you sing *Alleluia*?

Of course, some don't come. For some, it is just too incredible to believe and to celebrate. It's better to just do those material things we can see and feel.

But, even they will feel this longing that I bet you feel at times. If you have lost someone you love – a husband or wife; a parent or a sibling or a child; a grandparent or

a close friend I'll bet there are times when you are drawn to the graveside, standing there thinking about that one whom you are missing.

Perhaps you talk to them a little. I do, when I go to my mother's grave. I sit down there and I just talk to her. (Well, I look around to see if anyone can hear me, first.) I tell her I miss her – her voice, her laughter, her scent. I had this thing about smelling her clothes and hated when that scent began to fade. The thing with death is that it's seems so final. I hate that about death!

I think that is one main reason why we come here to celebrate the resurrection. Am I right?

Of course, there are other things. Like – with the resurrection of Jesus, God's power is shown to be so mighty, so strong, so amazing. Wouldn't you have loved to have been in that tomb on that Saturday just to watch God's power at work, when he called his son to wake up and rise?

We, who are apt to believe in these things, now are once again assured that Jesus, without a doubt, is the Son of God – the Messiah, the Christ.

But I know there are many who find it difficult to believe in a resurrection from the dead. Some will say they can believe in the birth, the miracles of Jesus, the prophet, the teacher, even that he is the Son of God. But – raised from the dead? That may be a stretch.

But here's the thing. If there is a God – and I fervently believe there is – and God is the creator of all things – regardless of how it happened – Big Bang, evolution, Creation and an actual Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden –

If God is God, then God is powerful enough, God is omnipotent enough, God is majestic, mighty enough to send his Son to earth as a human, to allow him to die a horrible death for the sake of all the people God loves (which by the way, is everybody, which includes you – have no doubt about that) –

If God is God, then God is able to raise His Son and anyone else, from death to life, and not just temporary life like Lazarus had after Jesus' raised him. No, we are talking eternal, everlasting life that will never face death again.

This love trumps everything!

There will be no more weeping. There will be no more fear, no more grief, no more sickness. Just life. The best life you can imagine, because it is in the presence of Jesus who is the one who has made the way for us to have this life.

The gospel of John begins at the beginning – all the way back to the time of creation. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God ...”

And when we think about the beginning, whether it be a literal garden or a metaphor, we remember what happened to the Creator’s two little peeps that he had made and breathed life into. They turned away and disobeyed God and were banned from that garden forever.

Somehow, it seems so appropriate for John to end his gospel with the garden scene and with Jesus, by the way, as the gardener. Could it be that, with Jesus’ death and now resurrection, even the gate to paradise has been unlocked forever? The key thrown away? Now, we Easter Peeps can enter, even as we pass through death from this life to that eternal one that he has given to us.

Thanks to Jesus, there is restoration. This love trumps everything!
There is hope for the hopeless. No matter what happens, there is still good news.
Frederick Buechner says *“Resurrection means the worst thing is never the last thing.”*

There is grace poured out for us. In Christ, we have been forgiven. We have a new life in him. The old life is past. A new begun. Even when we slip and fall off the path, we are invited to ask for help and forgiveness. But, even as we are still not perfect, Christ has our backs. He has us covered.

Christ is the Victor! He wins over death and sin and evil. Resurrection is God’s triumph over death. Adam Hamilton in the book *Final Words* describes it as God entering a boxing arena where evil seems to have the upper hand.

If we look around today, with all the bad news we hear – the threats, the violence, the diseases and disasters – it would seem like evil still has the upper hand.

But, things are not as they seem. Yes, it is here, and it is real. But evil does **not** have the upper hand.

Friends in Christ, the strife is over. Death, where is your sting? Because Jesus lives, we too shall live. Christ is the victor. God’s kingdom is very near.

This love – God’s love through Jesus Christ – trumps everything! And we, the followers of Jesus today, are invited to participate in continuing that love and grace and servant hood that Jesus modeled for us. So that others will see the living Christ in us.

We have been sharing our faith stories throughout this Lenten Season. And we have been so blessed by them. I pray you will continue sharing those little pieces of where God has been active in your life.

Share them until it just becomes natural. Tell them at your gatherings, in fellowship, at Bible Study.

You are the Body of Christ so it should become very comfortable, and it will be so joyful for others to hear ...

Because it is in the sharing and hearing that we can see and come to believe that Christ truly has risen, and that he lives in you and me.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

© Copyright 2015. All Rights Reserved.