

The Pastor's Report

To the members and friends of our Church, Grace and Peace to you in the name of the God who creates us, the Son who redeems us and the Spirit who sustains us.

Now that Easter has come and gone, I've had the time to reflect a bit on the theology of the resurrection. As my wife Linda and I move solidly into the middle part of our fifties, one of the emerging themes we've come to recognize is that of loss. We have reached a point in our lives where our parents have suffered illness and death, we've had to say good-bye to old and dear friends here at the church, we don't seem to be able to do all the things we once did, and the windows of opportunities we always believed we'd have to do some of the things we always thought we would seem to be closing at a quickening pace. All of us reach a certain point in our life where loss abounds, in either large or small measure, depending on fate and circumstance. In such times it is very tempting to define ourselves by our losses; that we consider ourselves to be on a trajectory of attrition.

There is a large part of me which would simply like to resolutely accept such a trend as the natural movement of our dance through this life; we all lose a step or two. However, I think it is important to draw a distinction between incurring loss and having that loss define us. Certainly the story of the events of Holy Week is a valuable help in this regard.

I know that often times in my life I catch myself getting stuck on Good Friday and never making it to Easter Morning. Surely, the concreteness of loss is a more tempting place to stand than the

unproven ground of mystery and hope; we tend to gravitate to the familiar. The betrayal of the Last Supper is like an old pair of shoes and the pain of Good Friday like a well worn sweater; we are used to such things if not, somehow, comfortable in them in a strange kind of way.

What of hope though? What of new possibilities? What of rebirth and an ever deepening life and, yes, even miracles of discovery and exhilaration that might still unfold? Well, these certainly *sound* appealing. Who wouldn't wish for such things, or even dare to desire them? But how and where do we begin?

Certainly, there lessons to be drawn from the followers of Christ in the days and weeks after the resurrection: overcoming doubt, moving forward even though the way isn't always clear and, most importantly, continuing to expand the boundaries of what we consider to be possible.

I believe, though, the better examples of how not to be defined from our losses is one I find again and again with in the people of our church: joy and laughter. Now, I know that in many ways we are the Island of Misfit Toys; and, frankly, I wouldn't have it any other way. What is truly unique about our congregation, however, is the way in which we approach almost every task, every event, every moment of our life together with an expectation of gladness, of mirth, and of gain.

To all of you, I offer my profound thanks for the example you set for each other and, especially, for me. - Rev. Mike

"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy," - 1 Peter 1:8