

Oh What a Morning!

[Mark 16:1-8](#), [1 Cor 15:1-11](#), [Acts 10:34-43](#)

It is great to be a pastor on Easter Sunday! It is the one profession that is placed at the top of the pile on Easter Sunday! Picture yourself on Opening Day at Memorial Stadium in 1954 when the city of Baltimore welcomed the return of Orioles baseball as the St. Louis Browns become the Baltimore Orioles. Or better yet, for those who were at the game in 1996, picture the scene when the warehouse across from Camden Yards flipped the sign from 2130 to 2131 as the Iron Man Cal Ripken rolled into history. That's what it's like to be a pastor on Easter Sunday! Picture yourself as a reported on assignment as the Berlin Wall came down. That's what it's like to be a pastor on Easter Sunday! Imagine you are on stage as my uncle was in the 60's, with a small bluegrass band playing at a bluegrass festival known as the 'Woodstock of Bluegrass', expecting 2-3,000

people and looking out to see over 20,000 people in attendance.

That's what it's like to be a pastor on Easter Sunday!

Remember the excitement of a new millennium as people from

all over the world welcomed the dawn of a new day. That's

what it's like to be a pastor on Easter Sunday! I never truly

understood that until today – my first Easter Sunday as a pastor!

It is hard for us looking back to imagine the horror of the events of Holy Week as they were unfolding. Jesus the Messiah, who performed countless miracles, who spent a great deal of time teaching about love for God and caring for others was brutally and publically executed. The beginnings of a glimmer of hope were dashed as the disciples fled the scene, and the Rock upon which the church was to be built denied Jesus three times. Absolute chaos and desolation resulted in the

seeming defeat of it all with the crucifixion of Jesus, the son of God.

As hard as it is for us to fathom the despair and grief of Jesus' followers, it may be equally hard to recapture the joy of this morning in our Christian history. Let's face it – we've heard the story so many times there isn't anything new to it, is there? I believe there is a song that says, "Like a worn out recording of a favorite song." (If you know what song that is from, you are as old as I am!) I hope we never get to the point when we can no longer find joy in reliving the day when in spite of the gloom, despair, and sadness surrounding Jesus' death, Jesus performed the ultimate miracle and rose from the dead. The stone covering the opening of the tomb was rolled away. The tomb was empty. The grave clothes lay flat. Angels presented the news that Jesus had risen just as he said he would.

Folks – that’s exciting stuff! Can the Pentecostal in me get an Amen?!

My family and I started taking vacations when my youngest was about six. If you have children you know how tough it is to travel with them when they are young – it seems you need to pack a car for the stuff and a car for the passengers! I noticed that when we get together it is fun to reminisce about those vacations. The discussions always seem to start with, “Remember when....” I’m sure some of you have relived those special times with your families because it seems to keep the details fresh in our minds – we want to recapture the joy.

It seems we should take that model to remember and imagine and study the events around Jesus’ resurrection. We even reenact parts of the scene with communion as we recite words and conduct a service as Jesus instructed us to do. We

pause to reflect on the elements set to represent the body and blood of Christ, broken and shed for us. Thanks be to God that the story did not end at the cross. The story did not end at the desolation of the church. The story did not end with the despair and utter loss and grief of Holy Week. When we turn the page, everything changes. We come from darkness into the full light of day. The tomb is empty! The Messiah has risen from the dead! Can you feel the excitement of that? That's what it's like to be a pastor on Easter Sunday!

The gospel message read for us from Mark has a very strange ending. As we discussed in our Bible study, that was the original ending of this gospel. Yet it seems so odd because the women were instructed to go and spread the good news of Jesus' resurrection, yet they left and didn't tell anyone because they were afraid. Well we know that someone must have said

something because otherwise the church never would have been established. We know that the news spread like wildfire as the community came alive with the buzz of excitement – Jesus was not a corpse in a cold tomb but was alive and well and in their midst.

There is a special message for us today as we look back, pause, and reflect on those awesome events. Jesus is alive and well in our midst! We are in communion with God and with each other as we worship and love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and we love and care for each other as we love and care for ourselves. We are the body of Christ. We are called to spread the gospel of hope to a hurting world. We no longer need to live with the despair of sin and rejection. We are a part of the family of God as we accept God's grace for ourselves through the saving blood of Jesus. The song says they

will know we are Christians by our love! We are a part of this community and we have an awesome gift of love to share with those looking for meaning and purpose in their lives.

I have mentioned before that it feels like there is an excitement bubbling under the surface here at Mount Tabor. I believe that God is calling us to continue the celebration as we extend a hand of mercy and grace to our community. This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it! Let us take this excitement and put it into action. We are part of a thriving community, and we have an incredible gift of hospitality that is becoming famous on the local circuit. I attended a district meeting with our guide, Eugene Matthews, and was told how wonderfully hospitable this congregation is. I already knew this, but it was nice to hear from others! People are looking for a kind word, a warm welcome, and a message of

love and grace in Jesus Christ. We are the hands and feet of God in our community.

Easter Sunday is the perfect time to capture our renewed excitement and wonder of that first Easter morning. The bunnies and chocolate and eggs are nice, but the true celebration comes from knowing that Jesus Christ conquered death, hell, and the grave and lives and reigns in each of us. As we come together for our time of communion, I urge you to take time to renew your faith in the risen Christ. What is God calling each of us to do at this phase of our Christian walk? Let us come together as a congregation truly on fire for Christ. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Hallelujah! Amen.