

SERMON - EASTER SUNDAY - 12 APRIL 2009
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!

1 Cor. 15:20-22 (KJV) *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21] For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

What a joyous day! What a beautiful Easter Sunday morning! As the hymn goes, "Welcome Happy Morning!"

Even if the weather should be dark and gloomy, Easter is always bright, as it should be as the day when we Christians come together to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection.

As we come together to observe this Holy Day, this day that is central to all that we believe as Christians, we should take note of where we are in our relationships with our Lord.

In the society of today, in today's world, I am afraid that we all put too much emphasis on having fun. We put too much importance on being happy, to ignore anything that is not bright and gay.

We, as Christians, are not immune from this outlook on life. Just look at the attendance at Christmas and at Easter services as compared with the rest of the year.

Is there a reason for this?

Is it apathy? Is it apathy, or is it that we do not want to face our own mortality?

As an example, Holy Week, leading up to Easter, is now mainly ignored, not only by

individuals but also by many churches.

Is it that in facing the Passion of Christ that we have to face the reality of life, mortal life? Is it that when we are confronted by the suffering of our Lord Jesus as it is told in the Passion narratives, that we are confronted with our own lives, our own pains, our own sufferings, our own guilt, our own guilt for not being better Christians.

I can't answer those questions.

But, to quote Barbara Brown Taylor for the umpteenth time, "*The road to Easter Sunday runs smack dab through Good Friday.*"

We cannot have Easter without Good Friday. We cannot celebrate the joy of Easter unless we have experienced the grief of Good Friday, unless we have been at Calvary with our Lord to watch him die on the Cross, to meditate on the words of the Passion.

Unless we have been with Him in His darkest hour, we trivialize His Resurrection.

These words of mine this morning are not intended to put a cloud on today, on today's joyous celebration but to remind us all, myself included, that there is more to being a Christian than just coming to church on Christmas and Easter. That there is more to being a Christian than trying to be happy all the time.

I'm afraid that many of us in not wanting to confront the message of Holy Week, not wanting to face the suffering of our Lord, do not want to face our own sufferings and our own pain in relationship to our Lord.

As an example, as Father Sam pointed out a few Sundays ago, you would think in today's economic and financial meltdown, with the unemployment, with the fears that surround us, with the uncertainty of what terrorists might do next, that our churches would be packed, that we would have to have extra services just to handle the crowds.

But it hasn't happened.

We haven't changed. It is still business as usual. We still think we can do it ourselves.

We still feel that we can just rely on ourselves or even worse to make our selves the center of our being rather than God.

Life will, at times, be uncomfortable. Life, at times, will have suffering, will have pain, will have disease. It is impossible for us to live always on the mountaintops, there will be those dark valleys we have to travel.

It is in those times when we need God, not just on Easter and Christmas, but in the Holy Weeks of our own lives. It is often in the darkness when we can see a light more brightly. It is in the darkness of our lives when we can see the brightness of the Resurrection, the joy of Easter, more clearly.

The sooner we realize that, the better chance we have of having our own resurrection, the resurrection that was bought and paid for in Holy Week.

Amen.