

“Sharing Easter”

John 20:19-31, Acts 4:32-35 & 1 John 1:1-2:2

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We are on a mission from God to share Easter. Jesus has commissioned and filled each of us with the Holy Spirit. One truly celebrates Easter whenever they love extravagantly.

Biblical Scholar Gail O'Day writes, “When the church celebrates Easter, it also celebrates the beginnings of its mission. When the church celebrates the beginning of its mission and its empowerment with the Holy Spirit, the church also celebrates Easter. For John the church’s ongoing life as a community of faith, as the people who continue Jesus’ work in the world, derives from Jesus’ Easter promises and gifts. Jesus promised his followers a life shaped by joy, a life grounded in the gift of his peace, a life guided by the work of the Holy Spirit, a life of grace with forgiveness of sins and new life at every turn.”

All of us are commissioned to do what Jesus has done. With compassion we are to bring love, healing, life, and joy to every person, every conversation, and every thought. We are to strive to love one another as Jesus loves us. Easter is revealed through joyful love.

We are tempted to be negative, sad, and afraid to love. On Easter the disciples were so afraid they locked themselves in an upper room. Peter and John have already found the tomb empty. Mary has talked to the risen Jesus and reported the news to the disciples. Yet, they still are afraid, behind locked doors. The risen Jesus appears to the disciples saying, “Peace be with you.” Jesus is giving forgiving peace that forgives them for betraying him at the cross and by their lifestyle. Jesus is giving resurrecting peace that reveals how love is overcoming hate and fear, every wrong is being made right, life is triumphing over every form of death. Jesus is giving joyful peace that flows from God transforming us making us whole, complete, and perfect. Jesus commands them to share the Easter peace.

The disciples leave exuding extravagant love. In the next eight days their determination to spread Easter is dampened by fear for their well-being, oppression by a corrupt government, pain caused by a broken church trying to be loving and perfect, but falling woefully short. Their tenacity to share Easter is diminished by their losses, grief, suffering, sickness of friends and their frustration that love is not resurrecting all fast enough. So eight days later the disciples again lock themselves in the same room in fear. The risen Jesus appears to them again. Giving them peace and commissioning them again. Easter kept getting locked away but Jesus kept appearing. God provided many other miraculous signs and through their experiences of God they came to believe, to have abundant life and to love extravagantly.

Don’t let Easter get locked away somewhere in your life. Don’t let small talk lock away Easter, instead share God sightings. Share your experiences of God. Mary, Peter, John, Thomas, two disciples walking to Damascus, all the disciples were sharing their God sightings with each other. Our experiences of God enable us to share extravagant Easter love. Even if another’s experience of God is different, odd or strange, resist discounting their experience instead

celebrate. Share your experiences of God. Often you will be unsure of the meaning. God's invitation may be fuzzy. Often experiences of God are difficult to articulate. Jesus has commissioned you to share them; for in sharing our God sightings, we are enabled to share Easter helping God transform the world.

Sometimes our sharing of Easter is like the Easter lily, pale, fragile, struggling to survive in the flower bed. Our sharing of Easter should be like the dandelion easily seeded everywhere, growing quick, deep rooted, and tenacious in coming back.

Sometimes we let Easter get locked behind pessimism, constantly filling our minds with bad news, letting negative thoughts grow and run wild through our mind. The next time your Easter joy is locked up by negativity take out a piece of paper and write down good things you enjoy. Sing a song of praise to God. View art. Go for a walk with a friend. Ride a bike in the beauty of God's creation. Maintain a positive file of encouraging notes, emails and cards you have received. On difficult days read some of these notes. All of us have bad days, are imperfect, fail to love, make mistakes and fail to receive love. God forgives you. Each moment is a new beginning filled with an endless array of ways to love and be joyful.

Sometimes we let Easter get locked behind busyness. Busyness skews priorities. Resurrecting Jesus is not our job but enjoying Jesus and sharing Jesus is our mission. Eugene Peterson wrote, "The word "busy" is the symptom not of commitment but of betrayal." Let me say that again for those of you, who are busy thinking about what you are going to do after worship today, "The word "busy" is the symptom not of commitment but of betrayal." If you are busy let Easter bring humility, focus, presence in the moment and rhythm into your life, so you can radiate joy, peace, and love.

Sometimes we let Easter get locked behind our fears, insecurities, and the unknown. Rather than face the realities of life sometimes we retreat and give up. Easter empowers us with the Holy Spirit to go and try again and again. Easter dissipates the fear of failure for in the end Easter promises God will help us get everything right, in time we will be pure glorious love.

Sometimes we let Easter get locked behind judgement. Only Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. No denomination, religion, group or person knows the complete truth. Every person and group has at least a fragment of unique truth in them. Let go of judgements. Look for and celebrate truth and love.

Sometimes we let Easter get locked behind a perspective of scarcity. We live in a time and country of abundance. In the book *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Morrie says, "Look no matter where you live, the biggest defect we human beings have is our short sightedness. We don't see what we could be. We should be looking at our potential, stretching ourselves into everything we can become. But if you're surrounded by people who say 'I want mine now,' you end up with a few people with everything and a military to keep the poor ones from rising up and stealing it. The problem is that we don't believe we are as much alike as we are. If we saw each other as more alike, we might be very eager to join in one big human family in this world, and to care about that family the way we care about our own. Invest in the human family, Invest in people. Build a little community of those you love and who love you."

The disciples did not stay behind locked doors. Their sharing of Easter grew. Listen to a description of the early church, **Acts 4:32-35(NRSV)** “**Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.**”

What great abundance; an abundance of belief, community, sharing of God sightings and grace and “there was not a needy person among them.” That is Easter power transforming a poor, fear-filled, and insecure group of disciples quivering behind locked doors into a community of Easter abundance.

Alan Brehm in *Sharing Everything* writes, “We have all kinds of excuses for not practicing the kind of radical sharing that the early church did. Part of the problem is that we’re essentially selfish people, interested in our own welfare. Part of the problem is that we are simply afraid. But the fear that clings and grasps and holds on to everything for dear life is part of the darkness that holds the human race in a death grip. If we’re going to orient our lives toward the welfare of others we have to make a fundamental, radical change. Or perhaps it would be better to say, we have to let ourselves be changed. Like Peter, perhaps we need to be converted—we need to be converted from the fear that wrings its hands over budgets to the joyful compassion that sells possessions and gives the proceeds to help the needy. Only then will compassion for the needy become a way of life for us. Then we can follow the early church in “a way of living in which everything we have we receive as a gift ... and everything we have is available to others when it is right and good.”

Sometimes we let Easter get locked behind unsearching, doubt. Like the disciples and Thomas we long for more experiences with Jesus more tangible, definable, provable encounters with the risen Jesus. *The Life Application Study Bible* suggests, “If doubt leads to questions, questions lead to answers and the answers are accepted, then doubt has done good work. When you doubt, don’t stop there. Let your doubt deepen your faith as you continue to search for the answer.” Jesus’ appearance to Thomas is a story of hope and promise as long as doubt is searching it assures us that we will experience the grace of God.

John describes our mission from God to love extravagantly. **1 John 1-2:2(NLT)** “**We proclaim to you the Jesus who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw Jesus with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. Jesus is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen Jesus. And now we testify and proclaim to you that Jesus is the one who is eternal life. Jesus was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with God’s Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy. This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God**

is light, and there is no darkness in God at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to God, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that God's word has no place in our hearts. My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. Jesus himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.”

We are on a mission from God to share Easter by loving extravagantly. God is overcoming death with eternal resurrection life. God is overcoming sin and guilt with forgiveness, offering a clear conscience. God is overcoming chaos with peace. God is overcoming hate and fear with steadfast, everlasting love. God is overcoming judgement with community. God is overcoming sorrow with abundant eternal joy. Having received Easter let us find our voice and heart to share Easter. As God sent Jesus, so Jesus sends you. Amen