

A Great Year for Easter

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; John 20:1-18

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Easter Sunday

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I know. I know. It could be argued that every year is a good year for Easter. Maybe you lost a loved one a few years ago, and you really needed Easter. Maybe you were facing job insecurity or a child leaving home. And you needed a message of good news, that light wins over darkness, life is victorious over death, a message about hope and goodness and new birth. We all probably need that message every spring at Easter. But this year is different, isn't it? The world-wide coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent fallout have been described with words like "unprecedented," "of biblical proportion," and I heard someone recently compare it to one of the plagues in the book of Exodus. By now, all of us have been affected. And who knows when it will end?

Yes, we need Easter this year, and I want to offer a word of caution. We often make two mistakes regarding Easter. Sometimes we see Easter only as a past event that we celebrate once a year. We color eggs, buy a new dress, and have a big blowout at church. We celebrate an event that occurred millennia ago. And then sometimes we see it only as a future event for which we long. We hope for the resurrection that is to come. This morning I ask you to consider that Easter is more about today, the present, than it is about the past or the future. Easter can be a way of life for us, where the message of resurrection and new life informs and gives meaning and direction to our lives. It can be a way of life where the power of God defeats the power of death, where light overcomes darkness, a way of life that empowers us beat fear, cynicism, and depression. Isn't that what we need? I think we all can agree that this year, this year especially, is a great year for Easter.

I am very pleased to welcome Dr. Todd Wilson to our virtual worship today. Todd was Weatherly's pastor for twenty-three years. He is now retired and lives in Seneca, South Carolina. Welcome, Todd. First, tell us how you are doing during this pandemic.

Todd, it seems to me that humans cannot live without hope. I have heard it said that hope is the most powerful force in life. Would you say something about the importance of hope during this pandemic? And how is the message of Easter especially needed this year?

Todd, as you well know, the living cross is an important tradition for Weatherly. I get chills every year when I lead the children in to decorate the cross. Even though we are gathering virtually today, I felt it was important for our cross to be present. Did this tradition start with you? Why do you think it is so important?

One more question, Todd. How do we take the message of Easter into next week and the week after that?

Don't make the mistake of thinking Easter is only about the past, something that happened millennia ago that we still cling to today. And don't make the mistake of thinking Easter is only about the future, something for which we long. Easter is about today. It is our message of good news today, that light does win over darkness, life really is victorious over death. It is a message of hope and goodness and new birth today.

My friends in faith, sisters and brothers, fellow believers in the Easter message, hear the good news. He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia and amen!