

Monumental Moments

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Throughout history, almost every culture has built impressive monuments to honor their illustrious dead. From ancient Egypt to modern America, the effort to preserve the body of a deceased leader in an enshrined grave-site, has been extensive *and* expensive. This morning, however, you and I gather in celebration of One whose body was not embalmed; One who would not be confined to a single place or time; One whose tomb came-up empty! Our faith has no great monument to mark the final resting place of its leader, because we believe that the One we follow is alive and well, and continues to be present among us, right here and now!

The essential message of Easter, is that you can't keep Christ in a container! It's been tried before, and will be tried again, but it will not succeed. In spite of being nailed to a cross, regardless of the heavy stone, sealing his tomb, Jesus Christ continues to rise-up and live. We can try to keep him locked-away in our neat theological constructs, or in our self-serving constraints; but those confining boundaries simply will not hold. Just as Jesus refuses to let the expansive message of God's love to be curtailed, God's expansive love also refuses to let Jesus be conquered by death or captured in a tomb. That's what makes proclaiming the Easter Message - and witnessing to our Faith - extremely *exciting* and *challenging*.

It's exciting because we proclaim a *Risen* Christ - One who was dead and buried, and is now alive and active. And that's also where the challenge comes in, because we're not talking about a lifeless commodity! To have faith in a Living Savior means that our faith itself must be living and growing and active. It's not something that can be frozen in time, or reduced to a simple statement of beliefs. Ours is a Faith that contains surprises and wonder, mystery and marvel, as the Living Christ encounters different people in uniquely different ways. Therefore, we can't put Christ in a neat little box. He is far too complex to be reduced to a tidy packet of spiritual platitudes; too magnificent to be neatly wrapped-up - even in a dazzling Sunday sermon Which is why my Easter message for you today, is to remind you that *you* are the Easter message!

You and I have remarkably *Good News* to share - Good News that isn't limited to a particular time, or place, or people. This Good News [this

Gospel is intended for *all* people - people with all different kinds of problems and pain, hopes and history, lives and lifestyles. And just as we can't constrain or control the Living Christ, we also can't constrain or control the vast spectrum of those who Jesus Christ so graciously welcomes. The Good News isn't just for those who grew-up in a particular culture or religion. It's not limited by race or gender, social status or personal preference. That's what makes it *Good*, and that's what makes it *News*. It's a refreshingly *new* way of understanding the graciousness of the Holy One who welcomes and embraces all people. And it's a message that can continually break-forth in new and glorious ways.

In and through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Divine Source proclaims and displays an unstoppable love - one that will always find a way to break through the barriers which people try to set-up. A love that, in the person of Jesus, reaches out to the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast. A love that doesn't stop, even when threatened by the dangerously powerful religious and political leaders. A love that takes-on the brutal pain of rejection, suffering, and even death itself; yet a love which will not die.

On that first Easter morning, as those followers of Jesus are running back-and-forth from the tomb, it's like a visual representation of the fact that the Good News of Easter simply can't stand still! It grabs hold of your heart, and then moves into your head, hands and feet, and throughout your entire being. When the realization hits home - when the Holy One's total and undying love for *you* becomes real and takes hold of your life - you find that it's something that you can't keep buried inside; nor do you want to do so!

The Resurrection isn't just something that happened on a Sunday morning long ago. When those early believers talk about being witnesses of the Resurrection, they aren't saying that they witnessed that event, in that brief moment of time. As far as we know, there were *no* eye-witnesses to that particular phenomenon. A witness of the Resurrection, therefore, is anyone who comes face to face with the continuing power, spirit, and reality of Jesus Christ. And that can happen at an empty tomb, or a locked upper room; on the road to Emmaus, or the road to Damascus, or even on Chippewa Road in Brecksville Ohio!

Jesus says, "Wherever two or more are gathered in My Name, I am there in the midst of them." This morning, the Risen Christ is among us - as we

hear the Good News, as we share the Bread and Cup, and as we convey to one another that same kindness and compassion, graciousness and love that Jesus Christ shows us all. Today, as you and I share the Good News of Easter, we also *embody* that Good News - as the living, growing, and expanding expression of a Love that doesn't stop and a Life that will not end.