

## A BRIEF SUNDAY MESSAGE FOR MARCH 29, 2020

Since we are not able to meet on Sunday, I felt that I needed to find another way to perform my pastoral duties and provide a message for you. I hope this one will encourage and uplift you. I miss being with you all. So here's the message:

Easter is fast approaching and as yet we don't know whether or not we will be able to meet to worship and celebrate this great event. Will it really matter not being able to come together? What impact will that have on you? After all, we're so used to being free to go and do whatever we want. But now because of the concerns relating to the corona virus pandemic, we are no longer able to do that. It's frustrating to say the least. And by the time Easter actually arrives, we might be experiencing a much wider range of emotions. Being cooped up for so long can fray the nerves and make us short-tempered, leave us bored, depressed, and moody, or just plain drive us up the wall! On the other hand, we have the option of experiencing real peace, God's peace. How we handle the situation will say a lot about who we are and how we deal with adversity. So let me tell you a little story about Easter that will hopefully give you a different perspective about it and at the same time help you to rest in the peace of God during these trying days. I found the story in one of Chuck Swindoll's books, taken from *If I Should Die Before I Live*, by Joe LoMusio. Here's the story:

*If I were to ask you to describe Easter without using any words, you could only use punctuation marks, which punctuation mark would you choose to describe this Easter for yourself? Maybe this Easter is a comma for you. It makes you stop, pause, think, and listen, but that's about it. Perhaps today is a downer -- a big bold period. You thought you'd feel excited, but instead it seems to be more like empty ritual. You feel like you're not on the inside, but on the outside --- an onlooker.*

*It was a day when life felt like a period for Jesus' disciples. He was dead. He was buried. An end to expectations. But wait -- news of an empty tomb --- the period is no longer a period, it's a question mark. That's worse than a period. Now they're beginning to doubt. Where is He? They're perplexed. The guards are gone, the stone is rolled away. He is not there. And if not there, where?*

*An angel speaks, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while*

*He was in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and how He must be crucified, and the third day He must rise again." Of course they remembered! The periods are gone. The question marks are removed. There is one massive exclamation point!*

*That's what Easter is all about --- an exclamation of gratitude and of praise for the resurrection of Jesus Christ and for the salvation His victory over death brought to us.*

I believe the author is right, that's what Easter is all about. And we can offer that gratitude and praise to God whether we're in church or at home alone. What difference does it make? None whatsoever, as long as our hearts are turned toward God and we are freely expressing our love for Him. When we do that, at Easter or any other time, we experience God's peace, and there's nothing in the world like it. So whether we meet for Easter service or not, my prayer for each of you is that you rejoice in what God has done for you, and that you abound in His peace. May God richly bless you and keep you safe. I look forward to truly celebrating our next time together.

Love to you all,  
Pastor Joe

*The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace.  
Psalm 29:11*

## FREE INDEED

In his autobiography *Set Free*, Roy Peterson describes how God's Word transformed his life. After making some reckless decisions at age 19, Peterson landed in a Mexican jail. One day, two "long-haired American hippies" visited and gave him an English Bible.

As Peterson read the words of imprisoned men and gained wisdom he wished he'd had earlier, hope emerged: "I observed grace, kindness and the value of humanity during a time when I felt so ashamed and unworthy."

Now, as president of the American Bible Society, Peterson works to provide Bibles to every person in their own language. Having been rescued from sin and death, he wants others to know that Jesus is "the truth [who] will set you free" (John 8:32, NIV).

## WHAT EASTER DOES

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is life-changing and life-giving for his followers. But, as Henry Knox Sherrill notes, Easter's "joyful news ... does not change the contemporary world." On earth, we still must deal with sin, pain, death and brokenness. And "still before us lie work, discipline, sacrifice," Sherrill adds. What Easter does, though, is provide Christians with "the spiritual power to do the work, accept the discipline and make the sacrifice."

By defeating the grave, Jesus empowers us to bear our worldly troubles with joy, peace and hope. His resurrection assures us that trials, tears and suffering are only temporary, while eternal victory and life with Jesus are permanent.

## IN OTHER NEWS:

- \* Don't forget to stay in contact with each other. Call, email, text - send a letter. Keeping in contact helps us all feel less isolated.
- \* Please continue to pray for each other, for our leaders, for the doctors & nurses, for those who are ill. If you have particular prayer requests, please call Donna K. @ 315.986.1227. She will put them on the prayer list.
- \* You may mail your offerings to Cheryl Meiers, 4360 Walworth Ontario Road, Walworth, NY 14568. Thank you.
- \* Remember: Wash your hands!



**"The Little Church That Could"**  
**"Believing is Seeing"**