

“Promote What You Love Instead of Bashing What You Hate”

Easter Sunday

Luke 24:1-12
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa

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Did you notice the title of this sermon printed in your bulletin? I'd venture to guess that I'm the only preacher who has ever entitled an Easter sermon, "Promote what you love instead of bashing what you hate." Here's how it came about.

Earlier this wee, my Facebook newsfeed included this anonymous quote posted by the folks at *The Celtic Christian Tradition*. I encourage you to "Like" their Facebook page. It's not a new quote, but one that has found its way around the Internet again recently. I reposted it on my page with the following interpretation: "While it is right to speak truth to power, and to speak out against injustice and oppression, which I do hate, I find wisdom in these words. Let us speak words that encourage and build others up!"

Well, what's that have to do with Easter? If you've attended previous Easter services here at College Hill, you would have heard me preach, as I often do, over and against a lot of orthodox traditional Christian doctrine, dogma and biblical interpretation. While I wouldn't go quite as far as putting it into the category of "bashing what I hate," it did cause me to pause this week as I was reflecting upon what to preach this Easter Sunday.

Is it not true that folks on both ends of any spectrum, whether it be theological or political, often spend a good deal of time arguing against the position of the "other side," sometimes to the point of demonization? I'm afraid that this occasionally happens at a presbytery meeting. And heaven knows it's been part of the often-pathetic goings on in this year's presidential campaign. But as we have all inherently know but often find hard to put into practice, **the better approach is to not just say what we are against, but to emphasize and articulate what we are for.** So instead of presenting a well thought out progressive Christianity response to traditional orthodoxy's take on the doctrine of substitutionary atonement in relation to Jesus' crucifixion, and the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus from the tomb, **I'd like to encourage us all to think about what and how we can "promote what we love" about the Easter message.** For no one can really explain the resurrection. We can only share and point to the story in a way that helps us to experience it with wonder and awe.

After all, **the very heart and core of the Easter message is about hope!** And any time we encounter the Sacred in scripture, we should pay attention to how it does have the power to transform you and me, and the world. **The Easter story reveals that even after the execution of Jesus, the Presence of Christ – God With Us – remained.** That experience had a profound and empowering impact on Jesus' disciples – both those in the ancient story and the early church, and to us here and now in this day and time.

Cynthia Campbell, president of McCormick (Presbyterian) Theological Seminary in Chicago asks: Where do we see Christ today? She answers: "out ahead of us." She continues:

Where charity and love prevail over injustice and violence;
 where compassion and hope replace cynicism and despair;
 where peace and love take root in lives that are empty and lost;
 where human beings know joy and justice, dignity and delight:
 there is the risen Christ.

The Easter promise of hope is this: the ways of God ultimately prevail over the attitudes, behaviors, and systems opposed to God's ways. Yes, our world is indeed filled with injustice, oppression, violence, cynicism, despair, emptiness, loneliness, suffering, sorrow and fear. Yet, **the Sacred Presence of God (as revealed in and through the life and ministry of Jesus, and through this story of his resurrection) is always with us and within us – miraculously enabling us to initiate and participate in profound moments of love, charity, compassion, peace, joy, justice, dignity, and therefore hope.**

This is what marks us as "Easter people" and as a "resurrection community." This is the good news that gives meaning to the old proclamation: Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!

So instead of just bashing what we hate – a common pastime of many, including myself – we have this hope-filled message that can enable us to promote what we love.

Amen.

Resources:

Cynthia Campbell, "When Is an Ending Not the End?" 2001.