

Easter Changes Everything

"By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not simply a fact that happened in the past. Rather, it is an event that changes the world, changes the present and the future, changes you and me. We live now in a world in which Christ has defeated the power of sin and overcome death. Jesus is alive, and his living presence is with us: by the Holy Spirit, through the message of the Gospel, in the sacraments, and hidden in our needy neighbor. We are witnesses of the risen Lord, and we are called to share the message of Easter with others. Three words can summarize the message of Easter, and they all begin with "L"--Life, Light, and Love.

LIFE. What kind of life? It is not just more of the same, just a longer life. Nor is it an escape from death. We will still die. But the life our risen Lord gives us includes freedom from fear of death. We trust that we will be raised from death to live with God forever. In addition, we have freedom to embrace life now, even in all its ambiguity and suffering and uncertainty, because Christ is with us in the midst of it all.

We are given the gift of "eternal" life, not simply life after death. Rather, eternal life begins now, as we trust God's love and forgiveness. It is life in the Spirit, given in Baptism, present within and among us. It is fellowship with God, a quality of living every day, sharing a portion of the life of God. Our death will not destroy it or end it. It is life lived not only for yourself, but for God and others. By staying at home now and practicing physical distancing we are showing responsible love for our neighbors, slowing the spread of the virus, and protecting the most vulnerable. God gives us the precious gift of life, to treasure and care for, and, even more, we have received new life in Christ, who is in us, among us, and around us.

LIGHT. With the resurrection, the light of Christ has burst into the darkness of the world. Christ's light is present in any darkness there is. Christ's light is the dawn of a new day for humanity, and for you and me. God gives us a new beginning, forgiven and made new each day. **Sometimes we cannot see the light of Christ shining, but it is still there.** Now for many struggling with the new coronavirus and the stay-at-home order, and all the losses and anxiety and uncertainty that have come with it, it is hard to see the light. Maybe you have had the experience of getting on a plane on a very dark, cloudy day. But after ascending through the clouds, suddenly you are drenched in light. The sun had been shining all along, though the clouds had obscured your vision. The light of the Son is always shining. The light of the risen Christ gives us the capacity to see God's good purposes and to see God's ultimate victory even in the midst of life's struggles. Christ is our light. and he calls us be lights in the world, to share his light with others.

LOVE. The resurrection proclaims that God's love is stronger than death. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love in Christ (see Romans 8). Neither our vices nor our virtues can keep us from God's love. Neither fear nor complacency, neither pessimism nor optimism, neither sickness nor health, neither death nor life, can keep us apart from God's

love. God's love will always search us out and find us. God's new covenant of love has been signed in the red red blood of Christ and fulfilled in his resurrection. **We are given the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ, and we share in the self-giving love of God.** This makes it possible for us to see every other person as a beloved child of God, also redeemed and loved by Christ. And it gives us power to love others as God loves us.

LIFE, LIGHT, and LOVE----three gifts the living Lord gives you.

In the peace of the risen Christ,

Pastor Steve