

Easter IN a Pandemic  
[written in oral form]

John 20:1-18  
Easter, Year A

April 12, 2020  
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Early in the morning, it was before dawn; it was dark.  
All was still, ....all was quiet,.....and it was dark.

Darkness and forebode hung like a shroud of fog.  
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Mary was needing closure. She needed to find meaning.

All seemed diabolically disrupted. What was,.....what everything was..... had come to a sudden end.

The normal full of hope,.....would be no more.  
No more touching..... no more times together.... No more.  
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As she headed down her path, muddy grief slowed her progress.

She put on her headphones, and heard an old tune--Angel from Montgomery.  
A heavy sigh escaped, as she thought, "Even John Prine is no more.

On she went, down her path, listening to the words, "To believe in this livin.... is just a hard way to go."  
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She arrived to the place where she planned to assuage her doubts and to release her sorrow. It was to be a balm for the past.

Yet, she found nothing. All was empty, as if the past had been stolen.  
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Distraught, she did a group text on Whatsapp to her closest friends.  
She called out to them for help in her search.

They came to her. A couple ran to her, and that was comforting.

Standing apart,.....they searched for answers / for understanding, but they too only found a void.

They returned, each to their own home in isolation, because they were suspicious of all outsiders.  
She stayed. She was too numb to move.  
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Alone, all alone she stood, weeping.  
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A few hints of light were emerging on the horizon forming stark tree silhouettes.

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As we humans often do while searching for a lost item, she looked again at the very place where she found nothing.

We do that... because absence/ an empty search resolves nothing.

So, we search again.

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She looked into the bleakness of the void.

She gazed into the unknown.....hoping to find an answer.

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I think we all know how she felt.

I think we can easily relate to her situation.

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I too was looking into the dark, empty past.

Two voices, they seemed like angels, asked, "Why are you so distraught?"

I replied, "I do not know what to do. It's been taken away."

It is supposed to be a joyous day.

Yet, the fellowship hall will be silent, except for an occasional groan from the wind outside.

It should be full with laughter abounding. There should be Easter bread and lots of other treats.

And,.....there will be no children. No children carrying plastic Easter eggs full of chocolate.

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What was.... is dead / gone.

The world will never be the same.....

What was is over,.....and a deep foreboding trepidation lurks all around,.....waiting for me to neglect to wash my hands, just once.

And, this is Easter?.....

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Nevertheless, I have it good compared to many who are hiding in fear and hunger.

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What was.... is gone. It was stolen.

I mumbled, "That is why I am distraught."

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Leslie and Katherine did not say a word. They did not reply.

There was no need to. They understood.

They understood what I was looking at.....and looking for.

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I turned and stepped out front.

[Even the weather was not desirable.....<]

Something flashed by, it was likely a bird. I did not recognize it.

I stood gazing at nothing, and thinking, "What am I looking for?"

From an old, old story I recalled the question, "Whom are you looking for?"

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Suddenly, I heard a soothing sound calling out to me.  
It touched me like a long-lost-loved-one calling my name.  
.....It called my name.

I turned to look at the tree where the sound came from.  
Not far from me was a beautiful cardinal.

I could not touch it, but wanted to. It was so wonderful.

*We are so limited in "touching" ...these days.*

There is was, right before me singing merrily,..... as if it was Easter.

His song filled the morning sky, and soon others joined in.

I lowered my head in reverence, and saw smiling daffodils looking up at me.  
getting brighter

The sky was

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*God have mercy,.....it is a new day. It is going to be a new day.*

What was.... is gone,..... It **is** a NEW Day.

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So, I have come to you this morning, to announce to you that  
Today we celebrate the resurrection!

I am here to remind you, as the birds and flowers reminded me,

WE ARE Resurrection people.

The redeeming face of God has not left us.

God has Not abandoned us.

God is here in a New way, and that includes singing birds and cleaner air.

God is IN the pandemic. God is creating a NEW Day.

We have hope.

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This is not to suggest we are immune from tragedy and hardships.

Nor are we immune to the Corona virus.

The early Christians suffered greatly from many causes and reasons.

Yet, they had a new hope / a new vision, and a new purpose imbued with Grace. God's Love.....Love sustained them.

In their minds and hearts they knew Jesus, Jesus the Christ.

They knew that Jesus did not end.

The resurrection was a turning point / a gateway to a new future.

They knew that God, in a mighty declaration, said,

"YES, the way of Christ prevails!

The way of justice, compassion, peace, grace and love prevails.

The darkness / the evil / the past destruction Cannot and Will not overwhelm God and God's love for all.

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We too know this,.....yet sometimes we forget.

Sometimes our fears get the best of us.

Sometimes the daily news distracts us.

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This pandemic is extraordinary.

The response to the virus is to unplug society, including capitalism.

Containment was the reason, yet this action will cause a reboot/ a restart / .....a possible rebirth.

In this radical transformation is the potential for something very good. We must Not try to reconstruct the past.

Other pandemics have prompted societies to work together and to push for greater justice and equality.

I am not making a prediction, just declaring it is time for the resurrection.

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As resurrection people.....we live a new life.....a new day, each day.

We can be instrumental in giving that hope to others.

As resurrection people, in the Pandemic, God's love will fill our souls with love for all, including ourselves and our view for tomorrow.

We the church are the resurrected Christ in this pandemic.

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More and more, people in the dark will be searching for the past, and searching for understanding.

Beginning today and into the future is **OUR** time to help form a new way--God's way. This is **OUR** Time to rise up!

God is calling us to be / to live in the resurrection, to proclaim justice and grace, and the Year of the Lord.

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And, this begins with you and me.

We are at the gateway / the portal to the unknown.....and God shines clearest in the unknown. We are people of faith. No need to fear.

Moreover, we have the unique opportunity to start fresh.

The old is gone.

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So, discard the regrets from the past.

Sort what you like from yesterday, and release those old patterns and habits that were destructive.

No need to lament what you did not accomplish.

It is a new day.

Go after your dreams

Write that book. Learn to play a new instrument. Make music.

Do Art. God will shine in your muse..... Leap into tomorrow.

And, Dance. DANCE!

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There is a delightful line in the recent movie "Jo Jo Rabbit"

It is, "Dance to show God we are grateful to be alive."

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When we resume the freedom to embrace and be actually together, we will gather in worship, and we will sing and sing and sing.

In addition, I think we should also dance.

So, in the privacy of your own home, start practicing.

We Mennonites need to practice.

Dance....dance .... dance.

Show God how grateful you are to be alive. Today is a new Day

God is with us today.....and tomorrow.  
We are in the resurrection

Hallelujah.....AMEN.