

COVID-19 MESSAGE #6—Inside the Easter Story

Matthew 28:1-10 John 20:1-18

This Easter message is entitled “Inside the Easter Story”, and I first want to tell you how this title arose.

Here at Westport Presbyterian, we have been blessed by the music and friendly personality of a classical pianist named Ron Brown. As a teenage prodigy, Ron Brown was the first African American to perform with the Kansas City Symphony. As a gay black man, Ron faced prejudice and walls of separation most of his life. Ron loved Schubert and Beethoven and Scarlatti, but he could still play gospel and blues, church hymns, Broadway show music and pop. He had two Steinway pianos in his living room, and *“Some people say they saw Ron Brown playing both of them at the same time.”*

Ron sang in our choir, introduced the congregation to *“Lead Me, Guide Me”* which we will sing today, as we do most Sundays. On occasion, Ron led the music direction for worship here, and in planning meetings, he told me he was happiest in life when he was—*“Inside the Music”*.

Another equally luminous artist here, Stan Morgan, created an exciting sculptured mask in Ron Brown’s honor. Hanging at the back of the sanctuary right now, it is entitled *“Inside the Music”*.

Today, I want to adapt Ron’s idea and share with you what I think it means for all of us to live “Inside the Easter story”

It’s definitely the place to be while we cross this wide, treacherous river...because....

- Inside the Easter story.....the person to see the risen Christ is the one who really loves him. Mary Magdalene. A couple other women, according to another account. Whatever, apparently, if you don’t love him, You can’t see him. All you see is a guy who looks like the gardener.

- To tell the truth, the story is a bit confusing. People are running up and down. Hushed voices! Someone claims there was an earthquake. Is that how the stone moved? An angel was sitting inside the tomb. Or were there two? You can see for yourself he is not here. Peter and John arrive, don't see much. An empty tomb! They don't believe the women. What a surprise! Then they dash off. It's not much of a story really, definitely not as attractive as the Christmas story. Except for the fact that it blew the minds of a few people who were there, a mystery of some kind of unimaginable power. All we know is, life and death have never looked the same.since
- Inside the Easter story, the boundary between the physical world and the invisible, spiritual world is dissolved, and all the sudden, out of the blue, we start longing for joy and the uninhibited power of God's love.
- Inside the Easter story, you realize that **you** are not a physical being having a temporary spiritual experience. No! **You** are a spiritual being having a temporary physical experience.
- Inside the Easter story, more and more people realize what is really important and they go and put their lives on the line because they have found out that by saving one life they save the whole world.
- Inside the Easter story, people are still afraid. Some even have panic attacks. But then they plan their own personal prayer counter attack and without even hardly realizing it, they become just as courageous as the blubbering Lion did in the Wizard of Oz.
- Inside the Easter story, nobody stays dead for long. They only stay that way long enough for the people who loved them to be sad, and even totally upset, sending up moans and shouts and such.

But then they—I mean the ones who died—they head off on what C.S. Lewis called the Longer Journey—where you start traveling into Deep Heaven. I mean—Really, Really Deep—Heaven. That goes on forever and everywhere, with everyone who truly wants to be there, I think. Don’t you?

- Inside the Easter story, the Earth, which was on the verge of being ruined beyond recognition because the beautiful, blue envelope of air that surrounds it was getting warmer and warmer and warmer—is resurrected as a new earth, after people and neighborhoods and cities and even previously backward thinking nations commit to using less oil and coal and gas and more sun and wind to stop the climate from changing.
- The sky still says blue. But now it’s cool. Like Kobe Bryant was.
- And the people all stay six feet apart....because they become quite smart. Like Dr. Fauci is.
- Inside the Easter story, there’s a glad surprise! Jesus is risen. He is risen indeed. And Thomas doesn’t believe it, but eventually he comes around.
- Inside the Easter story, all the bad people become good and all the good people become nice.
- Inside the Easter story, the best war is the war that doesn’t get started in the first place.
- Inside the Easter story, after the initial terrible, awful, grim and growing wave of COVID-19 pandemic deaths, all over the earth—Things never go back to normal. Instead there’s a **new** normal.
A **new** health care system.

Your **new** neighborhood.

The **new** Kansas City.

Even the new Missouri....and Kansas too—hard as those are to believe.

The **new** Sunfresh grocery store sacker is there inside the Easter story.

The **new** CVS assistant store manager who came in to work every day even though her children begged her not to.

The **new** online shopper at Hy Vee who started wearing a mask and told every shopper crowding around her to get the **H**....six feet away or she was going to bust them upside the head.

The new bus driver.

The new ICU nurse.

The new emergency room physicians who weren't sure they would make it.

The new you.

The new me.

Wow! It's fun. It's new! It's the future! Living inside the Easter story.

- Why, Inside the Easter story, the people who run all the different parts of all the different governments start caring about—the unemployed and the underemployed—the homeless people, the renters with no rent and the home owners with no mortgage payment—the small business with no customers and the day care center with no kids because the parents are at home all the time now.
And the poliicians do all this, not just because it helps the economy and the GDP, but just because it needs to be done—whether there's a pandemic going on or not.
- Because inside the Easter story, they give you things like Social Security and college grants and child care even when everyone isn't scared out of their wits from a global pandemic.

- And they give you real money, which Yogi Berra said, is just as good as cash. And everyone thanks Andrew Yang who they said was crazy, but turns out his idea wasn't so bad after all. Even Trump liked it. And he just found out about Easter.
- Inside the Easter story, the pandemic gradually subsides, and then the scientists find a vaccine for it, and it goes away forever. Or just about. Like the bubonic plague. Or smallpox. Or diphteria, polio and other diseases that used to hurt and kill lots of people.
- Inside the Easter story, everyone pitches in to help God become God. And you don't even have to call God—God—if you don't want to.
- Just put another “O” in it.....Good will do. God doesn't care. God doesn't care what you call God. As long as you don't use it for a useless purpose, or some selfish reason. God just wants you to love God.
- Inside the Easter story—artists keep creating beauty and meaning and they sing and paint and dance stuff that people cannot for the life of them put into words.
- Lovers start loving again.
- Instead of poor widows giving their last dime to the church, the church starts giving its last dime to the widows.
- Why it's a real resurrection. It's an insurrection! It's dangerous! It's fun! And there's.....flowers!

- And without even knowing it, people start going around saying startling things to each other like the brave, little feather capped mouse Reepicheep did in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*:

I will not leave a mystery behind through fear.

"If you are a foe, we do not fear you!

"If you are a friend, your enemies shall be taught the fear of us!"

Put me and my people at the front!

"We are not seeking things of use. We seek honor and adventure."

"I will do everything I can to get to Aslan's country!"

Will you do that? Now! And tomorrow!

If so, and all this sounds true and right to you—or at least it's close enough—

Welcome!

You are living inside the Easter story!

Rev. Scott Myers, Westport Presbyterian Church
Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020