

11 April 04 - Easter C

“So What Happens Now?”

Luther’s catechism question, “What does this mean?” = So what? That’s the question for you this morning.

I’m not going to try to convince you that Jesus rose from the dead. You already believe that. Or you sort of believe it. Or you want to believe it. Or at the very least you want to believe something, something about sin and death being overcome, something about there being some lasting meaning to this short life. *Otherwise, you wouldn’t have gotten up so early on this rainy morning. / That’s why you’re here this morning, unless it’s because your parents dragged you kicking and screaming.* You’re here because you already believe or because you want to believe.

So I’m not going to try to prove to you that Jesus rose from the dead. I’m just going to proclaim that he did. Because even if I could prove it, that wouldn’t get you very far. It’s the next question, the by far more important question, that counts. And that question is, “So what?” So what, if anything, does Jesus rising from the dead mean for my life? So what, if anything, does Easter have to do with my life, with my dying parent, with my dead child?

Sentient creatures, who know that one day we shall die and be gone for good. So we try get around that any way we can. We have children to carry on. We build buildings as lasting monuments. We write wills and leave legacies. We attach ourselves to something bigger than ourselves. All good. But not really enough. All these will end; all this will end. What we need is some hope outside ourselves. What we need is a future not of our own creation. What we need is saving from the grip of sin and death. What we need is resurrection and new creation.

So what does Jesus’ rising from death mean? It’s God’s way of telling us that we were not created to enjoy this short life and then die. It means that we were created to enjoy this short life, then die, and then be raised on the last day to live eternally with God and with those who have gone before us and those who are with us, even the ones with whom we have trouble getting along, and those who will come after us down to the last generation. That’s what Easter means for your future and for mine.

And what does Jesus’ rising mean for my life here and now? What does it mean for my grief which overwhelms me now? What does it mean for my worries which consume me now? Well, Easter might mean that what Jesus said about finding real life by losing it for his sake is really true, and that the way to find this real life is to be connected to his body, that is, other believers, and that the more tightly I hold onto my my life, the more it diminishes, but the more I give it away, the more it flourishes. Easter might mean that.

Easter might mean that while my grief is most real, it is not final, because death does not sit upon its throne as victor, Jesus does. So when I grieve, I do not grieve as one who has no hope. Easter might mean that.

And it might mean that my worrying makes no more sense than a lily worrying over how it will be clothed, because I am and always will be in God's hands, and the God who raised Jesus from the dead will take care of me in life and in death.

Easter might mean every one of those things. Then again, it might next to nothing at all. That depends on how you and I answer the question, "So what?"