

Easter Sunday
St. John 20:1-18
April 16th, 2017
St. George's Church Bolton
Fr. Chris

Easter Is Coming

"I have seen the Lord!"

Easter Morning: I have seen. I have caught a glimpse, and I believe.

The long night is over. Light has replaced darkness. Faith has removed fear. There is life instead of death. Hope has replaced despair. Easter is coming. Easter is here.

Winter brings with it—it's emotional distress. The green leaves turn beautiful colors here in New England and then shrivel up into the brown waste on the ground which we are all too quick to spend our energies to sweep up. They leave behind the grey skeletons of trees, whose presence casts a pall upon the general mood of things. Lawns turn brown, and every sign of the life that was once there disappears. Gardens are also brown, with the wilted, shriveled lifeless plants marking the beauty that once was and has left us: completely gone. Dead. Death. Grey. In the bleak mid-winter. Even the sun seems to depart from us, though we know it is only for a time, we may rightly fear that it will not return, or perhaps never to return to cast its warm rays on our own lives again.

In the midst of this drab darkness, though it is hard to see, hard to even believe: Easter is coming!

Our world has grown suddenly darker, stressing out our day-to-day lives. We are on overload from all those 24-hour news cycle machines barking, shouting and yelling at us to be afraid.

Today we live in a very dangerous world. Troubles in Syria, an unsolvable civil war that has been waged for the last seven years and which has committed atrocities on hundreds of thousands of its own citizens and made refugees of millions more. It now beckons to draw us in by the hideousness of seeing the slaughter of innocents in the most horrible way.

But you didn't come here today to be reminded of that. You would like to get away from those images and this threat, if only for a few brief hours. Easter is coming to a church and home in your neighborhood soon!

Dangerous world? We are living with a crazy, bizarre megalomaniac in North Korea who threatens the peace of the world with his threats of bombs, missiles and nuclear war. Crazy, because it is to what end? What will it accomplish but his own eradication and the loss of many other innocent lives who will be so called 'collateral damage?' We now are living on the brink of nuclear war and holocaust, not seen since the early 1960's during the Cuban Missile Crisis during President Kennedy's tenure. Very brown, black and dark indeed. A nuclear winter. But: Easter is coming!

Sometimes our lives look like winter has hit them with its worst. We are holed up in our houses. Our daily lives become grey and drab. Every spark of life, just about, seems to have been snuffed out. Whatever small green patches in our lives that gave us hope, seem to have turned brown. Our stress piles up with the snow, which we are unable to shovel out of the way anymore, so much so that we feel trapped and "snowed-in." These dark times may happen because a job we once enjoyed has left us

feeling little more than a burnt out shell of the people we once were, little more than a cog in an economic machine which forces us to head to work so we can meet our debts and obligations. We can not remember what it means to feel happy or to enjoy our lives, we only feel empty, depressed. Talk about a passion play? There is no passion and there is no play! Or perhaps we find ourselves in a relationship that feels just the same way: going through the motions, but the embers of long ago once felt passion have stopped even glowing and have for all intents and purposes, gone out. Pretty dark. Seems very hopeless. But Easter is coming!

Thank God if you don't feel like you have been left behind in the bleak mid-winter. Thank God, because maybe it will be easier for you to see that Easter is coming.

Although, I must say, necessity is the mother of invention, and perhaps the more you need something, the harder you will work toward that end. Perhaps in this case, where you need quick relief from the deep darkness, the easier for the hope of Easter to mean redemption from the darkness of winter. And the easier to understand the promise of God, Easter is coming!

Like one child early this Sunday morning, calling on his sister, "wake up, it's Easter!" Indeed, it is past time for us to hear those words: WAKE UP, IT'S EASTER!

Wake up this Easter morn and look around you. The darkness is gone. The sun is risen. The Son is risen. And so are you! Easter is busting out all around us, if you will but notice and look. Brown lawns have turned green. Some trees are budding with their new leaves, and others have blossomed out with gorgeous colors of yellow, white and purple. Still other trees are sprouting buds on their grey branches, from whence will come the promise of new leaves. The first flowers of spring are pushing up in our gardens, and some have blossomed. The forsythia is in full bloom with its fine Easter yellows. Easter is coming! Open your eyes, wake from your long winter's nap.

What does it mean to say, Easter is coming? To me it means there is hope to discover. While the little ones search for eggs on Easter morning, our job is to search for the hope in our lives. Real hope for all of us. A real hope given by God. Darkness has not overtaken us. The sinister forces of evil will not prevail. Death has done its level best to conquer us and depress us, but we can laugh at death, because life has won the battle. Death cannot overtake us, no matter what winter has sent our way. There is always abundant hope, not that of any kind of dismissive Pollyanna. This hope is beyond the biology and botany of seasons, though it was writ by God long ago as a metaphor for us to decipher in our experience of the creation, the garden he gave us to live in. And there it is. A mini Easter, not unlike the first, to remind us that Easter is coming! God is coming! Hope is here.

"Easter is coming!" barks a K-Mart commercial on T.V., as an actor dressed up in a giant Easter Bunny suit jumps across the screen! Easter is coming, time to buy those chocolate eggs and bunnies and jelly eggs, as though this is what Jesus died on a cross to promote, or maybe hot-cross buns. Fill up those baskets!

The egg has been a symbol of hope since the earliest days of Christendom, when faithful Eastern Orthodox Christians portrayed the resurrection of Jesus in an egg in their Icons, as a way to show us there is a new hope in town. Easter is Coming, and that means hope is too, and the end of darkness and despair!

Baskets were brought by the faithful, filled with food to be shared with those who could not get to Church to celebrate the new hope of Jesus. They were signs of the earliest response of Christians to being given hope and reaching out to share that hope with those in need! Easter is coming. And you thought this was a purely secular unrelated symbolism and idea!

And the Easter bunny? He is a symbol of hope also, because he was placed on the eggs, after they were laid, to keep them warm and to keep hope alive that they would someday soon hatch. Easter is coming!

Have faith my friends. What you do today is about hope. You have been given hope-a really big hope. You are no longer dead, but you are risen in and with Christ this Easter. Death will not touch you any longer. Darkness has been put to flight. Rise up from the brokenness of your personal winter! Rise above the darkness and winter that has set in over our world! Spring is here. I have seen the Lord. The Lord is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Your Easter is coming! Easter is here! AM