

Easter Sunday, 2008
St. Luke's Church, Renton, WA
Kevin Pearson, Preacher

No one has ever said it better or livelier, so I welcome you to this Easter feast with words of the 5th century preacher, Hippolytus.

Are you God's friend and lover?
rejoice in this glorious feast of feasts!
Are you worn down with the labour of fasting?
now is your payday!
Have you been working since early morning?
you will be paid fair and square.
Have you been here since the third hour?
you can be thankful, you will be pleased.
If you came at the sixth hour,
come up without fear, you will lose nothing.
Did you linger till the ninth hour?
come forward without hesitation.
Even if you came at the eleventh hour?
have no fear; it is not too late.
God is a generous employer,
treating the last to come as he treats the first arrival.
Join, then, all of you, join in our Master's rejoicing.
You who were the first to come, you who came after,
come now and collect your wages.
You that are hard on yourselves, you that are easy,
celebrate this day.
You that have fasted and you that have not,
make merry today.
The meal is ready: come and enjoy it.
There's hospitality for all, and to spare.
No more apologizing for your poverty:
the kingdom belongs to us all.
No more bewailing your failings:
forgiveness has come from the grave.
No more fears of your dying:
the death of our Saviour has freed us from fear.
Death played the Master: but the Master has mastered death.

With that let me welcome you to life, the life and hospitality of this community and the ever new life in the Risen Christ.

The liberating good news is revealed in full force today: light will not be constrained by darkness; life will not be shackled by death; and fear is no match for love.

This is a true thing so hear it today. Let your bones soak up this great good news, because you don't hear it every day. It isn't the word on the street or in the newspaper. No, this is news you have to let your heart learn. This is the word that rises like grass through the crack in the sidewalk: tenacious. This is the story that's told looking back over time, and it's the story that informs hope looking into the future.



Over the weeks of Lent, several of us gathered weekly to tell and listen to stories from our lives. We told about our deep grief, and amazingly, in the telling, there was a gathering of grace. We told stories of the spiritual movement and learnings of our lives and it allowed us to see the hand of God at work. We told stories of encountering difference in other people and being surprised by enlightened by a new way of seeing the world. We told of our encounters of the Mystery: when we noticed ourselves speechless and on holy ground. Hearing the stories, telling the stories, it was plain to see that we who gathered had hearts that heard

I would be lying to you if I didn't say that every day is a struggle—the cross is present like a dull ache between the shoulder blades of our common life. The problems of our lives and our common life are real and it's easy to believe that they are the story of our lives. The illness and disease and anxiety of our lives and our common life are real and its easy to believe that they are the story of our lives. The economic downturn making CEO's rich is real. The war killing thousands, costing us trillions, for which the president proclaims victory is real. Precious species are dying and human rights are cast aside in the real clamor toward power. In all these struggles the cross is clear: the powers of death are trying their fiercest hands, and try to seduce our hearts and we may be tempted to believe these are the stories of our lives. But let me tell you, light will not be constrained by darkness, life will not be shackled by death, fear is no match for love. There is more to the story of our lives.

We may be tempted to spend our days wading in our own guild. We may be tempted to spend our precious life focused on ourselves and the raw deals we were dealt. We may be tempted to protect ourselves from every assault of love and life and light. But at the end of the night, love and life and light will win, they will be the story. And that is because the truth of our lives is that they have already won. There's nothing you can do finally to fend off the life and light and love God has hard-wired into the universe. Oh, we can give it a good run. But in the end, light will not be constrained by darkness, life will not be shackled by death, fear is no match for love. Let me ask you ...

What would it cost you to be the light of the world?
What would it cost you to be the life of the world?
What would it cost you to be the love of the world?

Is it your pride? Is it your fear? Is it your position?

Is it worth it?

When you know that all of your shame, pride, fear, and guild will be swallowed up n victory, is it worth your standing apart?

Give it up, for Christ's sake. Give in.

God wants you to feast as friend and lover. You were not born to stand on your own. The meal is ready: come and enjoy it. There is hospitality for all, and to spare. No more bemoaning your failings: forgiveness is yours. No more fears of your dying, death played the Master, but the Master has mastered death and lives.

Light will not be constrained by darkness, life will not be shackled by death, fear is no match for love.