

## ***“Your Real Life is Christ”***

Colossians 3:1-4

MAR 23 2008 Easter

How about a story about snow for Easter? While in high school I went skiing with friends in Vermont. The mountain was covered with snow. The chair lift carried us past a small jump and my friends all talked about how cool it would be to take that jump. The jump looked small from up above, but when we got close to it on the ground the little jump looked a lot bigger, with a steep drop on the other side. I remember standing at the top of the jump and realizing that once I started down the short ski track leading to the jump there would be no turning back.

Easter is a day when there is no turning back. The words we've heard from the Letter to the Colossians capture the exact promise and challenge of Easter morning. The promise is simple: Christ is Risen! The challenge is harder: **find him**. Not only is finding him a challenge, it is also dangerous, because if you put your hand on the stone, look in the tomb, and find him in this world your life will never be the same. There is no going back and your life will never be the same.

When I was a young boy what was most important about Easter was the basket of candy and colored eggs hidden somewhere in the house. Eventually, I moved away from candy and began to learn more about the story of Easter in the Bible. And as I continue to grow up (I'm not done yet), the challenge of the day goes far, far beyond the plan to find a hidden basket, far beyond studying the details of the old story, to a new adventure on Easter, easily stated in just two words: “find him”.

The promise is simple: Christ is Risen! The challenge is harder: **find him**. So where would you look to find the risen Christ? Here are some of the answers different ones of you might give as an answer:

[1] Find him right here in this church! Easter is the experience of a community of people who share amazement at the resurrection. There might be someone sitting right next to you who has found him, and could tell you all about it. Or maybe you've found him, and can tell the one next to you where to look. Or maybe the songs and prayers that surround us open your eyes to something you've not seen or believed before. There's something about the emotion and feeling of people around us that helps us tune into God more easily. I hope it happens to you this morning.

[2] John Calvin, one of the great Protestant reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, said that all the proof of God's love you'll ever need is obvious by just looking at the incredible beauty of the natural world. We saw some flowers beginning to grow in a garden yesterday in Rochester. Have you

seen any yet? This is the time of year when the cold and dark of winter begin to give way to the warmth and sunlight of spring. All the growing things are a reflection of the new life offered in Jesus. Study the first flower, bud or blossom you see this spring and think to yourself, “*If God can make this old twig grow so beautifully after a long cold winter, imagine what God can begin to grow in me.*”

[3] Some of you find the risen Christ right in the story. You find him and meet him by reading it in the Bible, and that's how you discover the reality and power of the resurrection. But reading the story is only the first step. It is a story that must be told! The ability to help others see the risen Christ is the very heart of evangelism. The story is meaningless until you tell the story to someone who has not heard it before. Think of someone you know who may not know the story well. As you tell the story, he is being found.

[4] Here's a fourth answer to the question... you can find him in your own hands, in the bread and the cup. Yes, the sacrament of communion that we celebrated on Thursday night emphasizes the physical presence of the risen Christ. Easter faith is more than a vague feeling of happiness on a sunny day, it's seeing and touching and tasting and believing. I'll always remember Tony a five year old with his chin on the communion table eager to hold the bread in his own hands for the first time.

I commend any and all of these strategies for finding him, anything that gets your hands out of your pockets, and reaching out to touch that stone and see what might be in the tomb behind it.

So let's take a second look at what the Letter to the Colossians has to say. This is from a translation called “The Message”: “*So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that's where the action is. See things from his perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life is with Christ in God. He is your life.*”

And so the ultimate proof of resurrection, as I study these words, is you! The map for finding him is in you! He's found in your real life. That's a phrase you might not be familiar with, “your real life”. Let me try to describe it: Your real life is not the life you settle for just to survive each day, but life at a higher level, the real life God intends for you to have, the life you hope and dream of having, not an impossible life, but one that is in

your grasp. When you find your real life you find the risen Christ. When you find the risen Christ, you find your real life.

It began on that morning long ago when the women put their hands on the stone and dared to look inside. What they began continues in you.

*“Don’t move that rock! Don’t touch that rock!”* It’s the wrong thing to say on an Easter morning, but everything would be so much easier if the stone at the entrance of the tomb was stuck in place. Maybe not easier, but things would be much more certain and much more predictable. If the stone doesn’t move, then those that hope are naive, those that dream are foolish, those wanting to change anything are doomed. If the stone stays in place, then death has the last word, discouragement reigns, and there is nothing anybody can do to change anything. But who would gather to celebrate that? Not us! We’re here because we’ve heard the stone move. We’ve seen the stone move. We’ve felt the stone move. God, we were the biggest skeptics when we first heard the story, but now we know that the stone has moved aside. Now we’re ready go in and see what you have done. Not just long ago, but in the present moment you invite us – now - to be your resurrection people. We’re ready to discover our real life in Christ!!

One word of warning: if you step past the rock and enter inside the tomb, there will be no turning back. *Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life is with Christ in God. He is your life.*