

1 Easter Year C

4/17/2022

Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12

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On April 15th, 1965, 57 years ago Friday...

a song was released that would climb the charts in the United States and Canada.

Written by Hal David and sung by Jackie DeShannon...

The Song “What the World Needs Now Is Love (sweet love)” continues to be a popular song in different generations and genres.

Written in the Vietnam War era...

The song speaks peace and love in a difficult time.

In fact, when I looked at the verses of the song, they are really a prayer...

Directed to God...

Lord, we don't need another mountain

There are mountains and hillsides enough to climb

There are oceans and rivers enough to cross

Lord, we don't need another meadow

There are cornfields and wheatfields enough to grow

There are sunbeams and moonbeams enough to shine

*Oh listen, Lord, if you want to know
What the world needs now is love, sweet love.*

And as we look at the state of our world today...
The song speaks to us too.

We are in need of love.

In our families.

In our own towns.

In our state.

In our nation.

And in the world.

In fact, a good argument could be made that no matter what time or place in the history of humankind there is a great need for love.

We talk a lot about love in our culture, yet we still seem to have it in short supply.

And this is why what happened on this earth about 1,992 years ago is still the greatest event in the history of our planet...

The greatest event in all of creation's history.

St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, wrote in his first epistle:

By this we know love, that [Jesus] laid down his life for us...

(1 John 3.16)

The cross and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a proclamation of love.

It was because of love that Jesus Christ came to earth...

As a baby...

Into poverty...

It was because of love that Jesus let Judas betray him.

It was love that kept Jesus on the cross.

And on that cross Jesus gave up his life for us...

Taking on our sins...

And making atonement for us with God.

For whoever believes in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will be saved...

And the ministry of Jesus pleased the Father...

For Jesus rose from the grave on that third day...

Victoriously.

It was early at dawn on that Sunday morning...

Jesus had been buried in the grave since Friday.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and some unnamed women gathered some spices that they had prepared and went to the tomb.

A large stone had been placed at the entrance of the tomb...

But when they went to the place the stone was rolled away.

So, they went inside, and the body of Jesus was not there.

The scriptures tell us they spent a moment thinking about where the body was.

It says they were perplexed.

I'm sure all sorts of things were going through their minds.

Who moved the body?

Why was it gone?

What does this mean?

It was at this moment that two angels showed up...

Startling and terrifying the women...

They announced that Jesus was not there, but that he had risen...

Just as Jesus had said he would.

In fulfillment of over 300 Old Testament prophecies,
the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is the most critical event in
world history.

It was the greatest event of love, ever.

Jesus died on the cross.

He was buried.

He rose from the grave.

All in the name of love.

As we consider the events in our world today.

Disease and destruction.

War and hatred.

There are a lot of things that are presented as the cure to the world's ills.

In the information age that we live in...

This technology driven society...

we hear all sorts of things that demand our attention...

Our allegiance...

Some ideas are pretty good.

Some ideas are very poor.

Some are helpful.

Some are harmful.

Nevertheless, there will never be a greater event...

A greater cure for our souls...

then the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is the climax of the story of humanity and God.

Jesus was no ordinary human in the sense of you and me.

Jesus was fully human, but he was also fully God.

God incarnate...

God in the flesh.

Jesus died.

And his death is different than all other deaths.

You see death is the penalty of sin... (Romans 6.23)

A problem that we all have...

Sin.

The scriptures say:

All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. (Romans 3.23)

Sin is choosing our own will, our own way, instead of God's way.

He has given us in creation the ability to choose in this sense.

But the amazing thing is that when Jesus was on earth...

He never sinned.

He never chose a way that was against God.

So, he didn't deserve to die.

But he did.

Voluntarily giving up his life.

And when he who was perfect gave his life...

He who did not sin, suffered the penalty of sin.

The curse of sin was broken.

Death in that moment was defeated.

And Jesus rose from the grave.

Making a way for us to also be free of the curse of sin.

This is why Jesus said that God sent his Son into the world...

Because God loves the world...

And whoever believes in his Son, Jesus, will have eternal life.

This is belief in the person and work of Christ Jesus.

This is belief in the salvation found in the cross and resurrection of our Lord.

But there is another interesting thing that happened on that resurrection morning.

After the women found the tomb and left, they went and told the eleven disciples and others all about what happened.

Now when the women told them about what had happened at the tomb...

Our Gospel says that:

...these words seemed to [the disciples] an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

Here me on this: *Believe the women.*

Don't be like the disciples here who thought it was just nonsense.

Believe the women.

Our reading is a call to belief.

And what happened on that day changed the world forever.

There is a prayer that I have become enamored with during this Holy Week.

It was prayed on Good Friday.

It was prayed last night at the Easter Vigil.

It points to the hope of the resurrection...

Not just a feel-good story...

But the power of the resurrection of our Lord.

It displays what is really happening with the reverse of the curse of sin.

The prayer says this:

[Father...] by the effectual working of your providence,

Carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation;

let the whole world *see and know* that things which were cast down are being raised up,

and things which had grown old are being made new,

and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord...

You see the resurrection of our Lord Jesus means there is hope for now...

There is hope for the future.

Because all things are being made new.

Without Jesus being alive from the dead...

everything we do today is just meaningless pomp and circumstance.

But because Jesus Christ has risen from the grave...

Things that were cast down are being raised up.

Things that had grown old are being made new.

All things are being brought to their perfection.

And this is the story that continues to be told and told and told.
Never to be forgotten.

It reminds me of a line from the great story of *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The story is in part about a powerful ring that is able to make its ringbearer invisible.

But the ring over time was forgotten.

And Galadriel explains this... saying:

“And some things that should not have been forgotten were lost.

History became legend.

Legend became myth.

And for two and a half thousand years, the ring passed out of all knowledge.”

The power of the resurrection of our Lord shall never be forgotten...

Though some may suggest it is myth or legend...

The events of the death and resurrection of our Lord continue to be proclaimed.

And so, we are the bearers of this great message of love.

The greatest love story ever...
between God and his creation...
His people.

If what the world needs now is love, sweet love...
Then may we take this message of love...
The Good news...
The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...
That he came and died for the sins of the world...
That he rose again victorious...
And that he is coming back again to set all the world at rights.
To establish equity and justice...
To make all things new.
This is the story of love.
A story that we are a part of...
A story that we have the great privilege of sharing...
May we go into the world today...
Proclaiming the good news of God's love.

Praise be to God!
Christ is risen from the grave.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
There is no greater love than this.
Amen.