

## **Christ Is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!** **Mark 16:1-8**

Happy Easter! Welcome to Asbury UMC to celebrate the resurrection of our Christ! I believe you all know the traditional Easter greeting. On Easter morning... when people have gathered for worship, a pastor greets, "Christ is risen!" Then, people respond, saying, "He is risen, indeed!" Let us share a more formal Easter greeting. "Christ is risen!" "He is risen indeed!"

"Our Christ is risen." This is the most simple but powerful confession of the Christian faith. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. God raised him from the dead and made him hope for new life. As Andrea Dunn has put on our church sign, "The Great Gift of Easter is Hope!" Death is not the ultimate end. There is always hope. Covid-19 variants, economic hardships, broken human relationships, health issues, racism, sexism, spiritual apathy... there are always some challenges and darkness we face in our lives. But there is always hope. There is always light despite all of the darkness. Our eternal light, Jesus Christ, has risen on this holy morning. I pray that we may feel this light of hope as we gather to worship our risen Christ.

### **Easter Bunny and Easter egg**

When you think of Easter, what first comes to your mind in addition to Jesus Christ? Easter eggs, Easter plants, egg hunts, chocolate, family gatherings. As a Korean, I didn't know American Easter traditions and symbols until I came to the United States. The only thing that I was familiar with was the Easter egg. A hard-boiled egg. Other than that everything was strange to me. As my time in the United States has gotten longer, I have come to understand some of them. But I still have difficulty relating the Easter bunny with Easter. When I don't understand something, I google it. According to a website, "Rabbits usually give birth to a big litter of babies (called kittens), so they became a symbol of new life. Legend has it that the Easter Bunny lays, decorates, and hides eggs so they are also a symbol of new life." Did you know this? Now I understand that a bunny symbolizes new life, but I still cannot imagine a bunny laying eggs!

My mother's friend actually sent us a small Easter gift last year. She made chicken kitchen scrub pads, which Juhee and I put Easter eggs in. I hope you enjoy your chicken and Easter egg. Each country and church have their own ways to celebrate Easter. The Easter Bunny for the U.S and Easter chicken for Korea. But they all symbolize the same thing—the resurrection of our Christ and new life in him. The resurrection of Christ is not merely a past event, but it is for the present and future. The resurrection of Christ gives new life for the present and hope for the future.

### **New Life**

What is new life, and why do we need it? As Christians, we believe that God creates us in the image of God. We are created to be selves and live in a loving relationship with God, neighbors, and all creatures. This is how we are created, and this is the way our souls can thrive. However, we somehow have lost our identity and authentic selves and internalized voices from the world. We have been entrapped in what Tomas Keating calls 'false self.' Following cultural messages from the world, we relentlessly pursue affluence, achievement, and appearance. We compete with others and get into a rat race. In this competitive world, the first thing we have lost is compassion for others because we don't see them as our neighbors to love but competitors to defeat.

Mencius, a Chinese sage, said, “whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human.” When we lose the heart of compassion and love, we become a rat at best and at worst a beast that hurts others and accepts that it's our nature. We are not rats or beasts! Are we? We need to be free from this entrapment and restore our true selves. But we don't know how.

I have read a story about a three-year-old girl. She was a first child and was very excited to know that she would soon have a brother. When her mom returned from the hospital with the baby, this girl asked her parents if she could have a moment with her little brother, just the two of them. The parents were a little bit concerned by her request because, we all know, that this kind of transition does not always go well. But since they had put a baby monitor in the room, they accepted this little girl's request. When the girl entered the baby's room, the parents rushed to the monitor to check what she is doing. They expected that the little girl would just stare at her little brother, but after a few minutes, this little girl asked her four-day-old brother, “Could you tell me about God? I have almost forgotten about him.” This story touched my heart. When we are children, we know God has sent us to this world, but as we grow up, we forget about God.

Just like this little girl, we have almost forgotten God. Because we don't know how to get back to God, Jesus Christ came to the world to show the way of salvation through his life. His resurrection is God's confirmation that the way of salvation is self-giving and other-receiving love; forgiveness of enemies; hearts for your friends; charity to all people rather than competing and defeating others. We remember this new life given through Jesus Christ and recommit ourselves to this new life on this Easter day.

## **Baptism**

The best way for the church to celebrate Easter together is a baptism. Thankfully, we have Scarlet to baptize today. Baptism symbolizes the death of our old selves and new life in Christ. Apostle Paul said, “3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6: 3-4)

In our baptism, we have been buried with Jesus Christ into death. In our baptism, we were also raised with our Christ from death into a new life. My Asbury family. This is who we are. We are God's children. You are not what you have, how you look, or what you have achieved. You are loved by God, and Christ grants us new life. So remember your baptism on this holy morning.

I believe the presence of Scarlet at the sanctuary is a blessing for all of us. Scarlet can't speak yet, but her existence testifies of our God and God's love for us. In baptism, Scarlet reminds us of the mystery of Easter as we proclaim, “Christ Is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!”

So, with grateful hearts, join this holy and joyful sacrament of baptism.