

Let's Go Deeper...

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

This won't take long. I'm not sure how deep I can go this week. The cartoon Michael Rintamaa posted to my wife Jennie's Facebook page on Easter afternoon is on target:



Let's go deeper with what I *saw* on Sunday, not what I *said*.

I saw Malcolm McGregor lead the choir down the aisle for the Processional Hymn singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." And I saw Malcolm's wife Anne close behind giving voice to the glorious refrain: "Alleluia!"

Also, from where I sat behind the pulpit, I could see my brother and sister in Christ singing the lyrics to the Easter Anthem "Joy in the Morning":

*They'll be joy. They'll be joy, joy, joy, joy, joy.
They'll be joy in the morning on that day.
For the daylight will dawn when the darkness is gone,
there'll be joy in the morning on that day.*

And as the children departed from the chancel steps, I saw them singing:

*In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

And at the end of the service as I stood in the front of the sanctuary with Central's newest members, Jen Pack and Bev Taylor, I saw Malcolm and Anne at one with the rest of the choir singing the Hallelujah Chorus:

*And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*

The McGregor's inimitable son Doug died suddenly and unexpectedly seven weeks ago. Mourners filled the lower seating of our sanctuary on a February Saturday to remember his life with tears and laughter.

I know full well the McGregors were not the only worshippers who came on Easter Sunday with heavy hearts. Emphasis on the word *came*. They and others who are experiencing grief and heartache mustered the... what is it?... courage, determination, resolve... to come to a place filled with happy-faced folks wearing bonnets and corsages, smiling and saying, "Good morning! Happy Easter," when, given their circumstances, words like *good* and *happy* feel thin, superficial, inappropriate. Such words just don't come forth from aching hearts and throats.

They could have stayed home. And not just for a Sunday but for many Sundays, or forever. Yet they came. And put their mouths around the lyrics of resurrection. And sang them side-by-side with the rest of us.

Last Wednesday at the ecumenical Bible study I attend at Good Shepherd Episcopal, my colleague Mark Davis from First Presbyterian made the observation that the reason there is a church is some women went out in the dark to attend to a loved one who had died. "Acting on love in the darkness is what church is," he said. "We can't control *when* the light will come, but the light *will* come. Until it does, the church acts in love in the darkness."

What I saw in Malcolm, Anne, and the many others who came to Easter worship "in the darkness" were people "acting on love." Their presence was a gift to the rest of us. Without their singing, my singing would have been diminished. Without their presence filling the pews to capacity, my experience of cup-runneeth-over fullness would have been lessened.

Sometimes faith comes easy. Fine. I welcome those occasions. But when I see someone "acting on love in the darkness," singing in spite of a heavy tongue, defying death and despair with a determined Alleluia!, I am steeled for believing beyond my own belief and I am given reason for hope beyond all reason to hope.

On Easter Sunday, I saw Malcolm, Anne, and others leading the rest of us into worship. In the darkness, acting on love, in spite of all feelings and evidence to the contrary, they sang, "Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia!"

To my eyes, that sight was a more powerful sign of resurrection than had I laid eyes on an empty tomb.

Pastor David

