

Last week, Christians around the world celebrated a rather crazy story.

It is a story about death and about life. It is a story of mistakes and forgiveness, of things that are broken and things that are made new. It is a story – actually *the* story – that defines the Christian faith, and it is a story that (believe it or not) has absolutely nothing to do with ham sandwiches or bunnies or eggs or candy.

Now, I am all for the sandwiches, bunnies, eggs, candy, and other family traditions that we use to mark this celebration of Easter, but this holiday...this *holy-day*...is about so much more.

I will assume that most of you (church folk and non-church folk alike) know Easter Sunday as the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, that is, the story of his coming back to life after being executed on a Roman cross. Likewise, I will assume that most of you see it as a pretty nice story.

For believers and nonbelievers alike, a story of an innocent victim returning from death to life is a pretty nice thing, and a good reason to feel happy and hopeful. It is a good reason to feel good about life, to dress up in nice clothes, eat ham sandwiches and crack open a plastic egg filled with candy. Again, I am all for that, but I wonder how much we (church folk and non-church folk alike) really think about what this story *means* in the midst of our nice celebrations.

As mentioned earlier, this story is for Christians *the* foundation of their faith. It is *the* reason for celebration in all that we do and all that we are. While most of us go to extra lengths on Easter Sunday to *really* celebrate Jesus' triumph over death, this story ought to be cause for celebration each and every day. It is no less than the story of God's own self, revealed in the

divine/human person of Jesus, breaking the power of death for our sakes, for all time.

Dying on the cross, embracing the pain and death of this world, God, in the divine/human person of Jesus, takes our place. God takes our place, bears our mistakes, suffers our brokenness, and through rising again, reveals to us a power and promise to make us whole, to give us life, and to make us, and indeed all things, new. By experiencing *our* death, God shows us *our* resurrection.

Now for those who find this story of Jesus' resurrection a bit unbelievable...for those who find all of this talk about a divine/human person dying and rising again a bit crazy, let me be the first to tell you that I am right there with you.

This is a crazy story.

Given all that we know of life and death and the ways of this world, someone truly dying and being resurrected days later is unbelievable. Someone doing it two thousand years ago for each and every creature of this world, for you and for me, for everyone that ever was and everyone who will ever be, is crazy. It is a nice story, certainly worthy of ham sandwiches and everything else, but when we get to what it all really *means*, it is all rather crazy. It is a story that defies what we know to be true of this world.

The unbelievable story of God's grace and love, revealed in Jesus' resurrection, is a crazy thing to grasp. It is a crazy story to claim for oneself and a crazy story to proclaim for another. I think it is fair to say that if you are one who struggles to accept it and believe it for all that it really *means*, you are most certainly not alone. If you are one who struggles to proclaim for others this

Printed in the Pastor's Corner column of the Brodhead newspapers on 5/4/2011

story and all that it really *means*, you are right where the love of God in the Risen Christ is...and that is the good news.

The good news of Jesus' resurrection is that despite our struggles to risk the crazy foolishness of claiming it and proclaiming it for others, it speaks *to* us and *for* us nonetheless. It is the story of a love that embraces us, whether or not we can claim to embrace it fully and completely. It is the story of a grace that finds us whether or not we can find it in ourselves to celebrate it for all that it really *means* on each and every day. It is the crazy story that *Christ lives...*for you!

May you know the good news of God's love and grace, for you and your life, and may you know it as a love and grace that exceeds our understanding, that challenges our faith, and makes us new all the same!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Peder