

“Rejoice Now”

- Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels...Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth...
- Those are the words that Brian sang as we begin the Easter Vigil.
 - We rejoice now with the disciples of Jesus who moved through the Good Friday world when they ducked for cover, and the the Holy Saturday world when all seemed lost.
 - With the resurrection of Jesus, nothing looked the same to them again.
 - Today we find ourselves singing with the disciples and men and women through the centuries:
 - “Rejoice now,” because “this is the night when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.”

Hoarders

- Yet oftentimes, we find it hard to rejoice. Oftentimes, we seem to be overcome by the world and our own fears.
- That was pointed out to me in one of my additional duties in town, that of driving around in the Kiwanis truck, picking up donations that people make to the Kiwanis Thrift Shop...or making deliveries to people’s houses.
- Typically, it’s a fun job
 - I get to drive behind the gates of the gated communities in Anacortes. I get to help people unload all the junk that’s been in the basement that they don’t know what do with, and that other people would consider to be very valuable.
 - But every once in awhile, it’s a sad and disturbing job

- That came recently when we delivered a big Barca-lounger recliner chair to a lady in a small house near the hospital
 - I should have realized something was out of the ordinary when we saw big rolls of carpeting on the tiny front porch, that made it impossible to open the front door all the way.
 - She stated that she was down-sizing (repeated 3X), and wanted to trade out a piece of furniture for the Barca-Lounger.
 - But, sadly, she was a little unclear about what was meant by down-sizing
 - She wanted to trade a small glider chair for this big recliner.
 - But in order to do that, we had to navigate through piles of newspapers, boxes of knicks and piles of knacks, a host of litter boxes and other stuff that we had to clear out of the way...not to mention the carpet rolls on the front porch, just so we could walk the glider chair out and bring the recliner in.
- O my goodness. A hoarder, just like on TV.
 - And I felt sad for her, not only because I saw her living in unbelievable chaos,
 - But because in her, I saw some of that tendency to hoarding myself.
 - After all, I do have an very early 1990-era Macintosh computer in the storeroom...the first every with an actual hard drive and upon which I wrote many papers in the AWC...and for which I have no real use, except for sentimental value.
 - But her situation had taken my treasured collectible and multiplied it by a factor of 1000.

The Fear of Loss

- What is it that drives someone to hoard stuff to such a degree?
 - For answers I turned to the internets, which has a broad variety of answers: from scientific journals to quasi-scientific Quatsch (nonsense)

- With the result that no one knows the reason:
 - Suggestions that region on Chromosome 14 is linked to compulsive behavior
 - Many hoarders are perfectionists. They fear making a wrong decision about what to keep and what to throw away, so they keep everything.
 - But the general conclusion is that hoarding is more than a desire to collect.
 - It's more about about a fear of throwing something away...It's the fear of loss.
 - It's the fear that comes about when our stuff, a particularly knick knack or a whole house of knickknacks becomes part of our identity
 - And if that "thing" is taken from us, we suffer kind of a death
- One doesn't need to be a hoarder to feel this fear of loss.
 - Many of us have felt at one time or another that we dwell in the land of the shadow of death
 - Because even though we are more comfortable in denying it,
 - Every person we love, every small animal we treasure, everything we rely and expect always to be there for us will pass away
 - Even we will return to dust,
 - As we are so clearly reminded at Ash Wednesday...."Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return."
- This fear of loss often leads to our worst decisions and behaviors
 - Fear of losing a loved one seems to ruin otherwise happy relationships
 - I thought I was brought up in a normal Leave-it-to-Beaver sort of family until my mother was passing away.
 - It was then that one of my brothers got into a major spat with my sister over inheriting the house.

- Another brother could not even come close to the hospice bed where my mother was lying but stood 10 feet away in hallway and didn't say a word, and he was, normally, the loudmouth of the family
- So what was going on?
 - This, I came to understand, was how they dealt with loss.
 - Their deepest fear of loss impelled them to their either destructive or incoherent behavior.

The Resurrection

- With all this primal fear, I can still say, "Rejoice Now!"
 - The resurrection of Jesus shows us that we no longer have to live in fear.
- The gospel writers were very certain about this new reality and went out of their way to ensure us that this was not fake news.
 - Despite all the contradictions in the Resurrection story, there is one piece of evidence that we read about in the gospels this weekend that would have revealed everything to a good consulting detective...and that is the curious detail of the burial cloths.
 - In Luke: But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.
 - In John: After the women told their story of the stone that had been removed, Peter and John ran to the tomb, and Peter "saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself." And after Peter and "the other disciple who Jesus loved" saw this, they believed.
- For these two gospel writers the presence of the burial cloths in the tomb was the key piece of evidence that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. Why is that?

- If anyone were going to move the body, they would have kept it wrapped up.
 - First of all, an unsecured corpse would have been extremely difficult to move
 - Secondly, who would be able to move a body with all the offensive effluvia arising from a body that had yet to be treated with spices
- The disciples understood that that discarded burial sheets were proof of the resurrection.
 - The man who was laid to rest in these winding sheets needed them no more.
- They saw this and believed, although they did not understand how this could be true.
- The disciples no doubt had the understanding of the resurrection as understood by many 1st-Century Jews: it would be an event that would happen to all the righteous people at the end of time, and not to one individual in the middle of history.

The Transformation

- The message of the Gospel writers is that although we may go through the valley of the shadow of death,
 - But the resurrection fills our life with light
 - Jesus reveals that death is no longer something that we should fear.
 - Jesus says again and again in each resurrection account, “Peace. Do not be afraid.”
- “This is the night when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell and rose victorious from the grave,”
 - This is the night when Christ destroyed the fear of loss,
 - And the defeat, isolation and despair that this fear brings with it.

- Because we don't fear loss,
 - We understand that we lose nothing when we "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves."
 - We understand that we lose nothing when we strive for justice and peace all people and respect the dignity of every human being."
- And with this this understanding, we come to realize that Jesus revealed the resurrection in every one of his deeds during his time on earth,
 - And we, his disciples, who live in a world that lives in fear of death and loss,
 - We his disciples must proclaim the Good News of God in Christ:
 - "Rejoice now, for darkness has been vanquished by our Eternal King!"