

St. David's Presbyterian Church
St. John's, NL
"Overcoming Brokenness and Death"
Dr. J. Dent

April 12, 2009
Easter Sunday

Introduction

[Hold up a chocolate bunny] The Chocolate Bunny: A thing of beauty; Part of the wonders of human creation; A symbol of sweetness and celebration; A symbol of life and abundance; Something to look forward to at Easter.

And as with all objects, as we reflect on the object itself, so do we reflect on ourselves. Hermeneutically, this is the merging of horizons, the symbolic self-projection onto the other. Simply put, using no philosophical language, the bunny is something like our hopes, our dreams, our very selves.

Our personal expectations crushed

The bunny is like the ideals of life and how these ideals unfold for us in life. They may start out whole and wonderful but as we gain in life experience, we experience defects in the bunny. [Examine bunny] We experience pain and loss beyond our control. We experience the cuts and bruises of relationships and sometimes even a severe brokenness.

And even with what we can control, we also face ourselves in our own lack of integrity—i.e. not following through with what we said we would do or be. Lying, cheating, not measuring up even to our most basic standards. Our lives and attitudes do not turn out the way we expected them to. A personal crisis happens and the defects in the bunny can mount up. [Crush a part of the bunny] Just like this.

Our expectations of others crushed

And others in whom we have placed our hope and our aspirations are like a bunny, full of possibilities and life. But other people disappoint us as well (eventually); through their own moral/ethical/integrity lacks. Yes. But also because they too can be the source of pain and hurt, and it may not even be their fault. An automobile accident occurs and brain damage results in paralysis for a young man 28 years old, a young girl in elementary school gets incurable leukemia, a woman not even in her senior years gets cancer, that is inoperable. It's not fair. A teenager decides to take his life. An adult

loses her mental stability and has to be institutionalized. The death of a loved one. [Break another part of the bunny]

Our expectations of the Church crushed

Consider the Church, which is the symbol of what is right and good, the symbol of new community and new life, already broken. The Church, which is to be the symbol of stability and the love and grace of God, becomes a place of bickering, of hurt, of politicking, even of abuse. I'm speaking about the Church Universal, about which the media loves to dig up dirt. The Church shows its cracks of sexual scandal and the cracks of hypocrisy (which is a normal problem in every community) and when we hear about these and even experience them first-hand, the defects turn into a crushing blow. [Break another part of the bunny]

Expectations about Jesus crushed

And even Jesus who was the hope of His disciples, the One they thought for sure would deliver them from all their political oppression (which at the time was Roman military occupation), Jesus, the One who would let them experience good economic times again—this Deliverer would set all things straight with a might army to prove he was the King hailed the capital city on Palm Sunday. Right?

But suddenly, He was arrested, violently abused and finally tortured to death on a wooden cross. Crushed [drop the bunny]

But His death was different. On that Easter Sunday, some women found a strange thing—the tomb was empty. And they met a strange visitor—who said Jesus was alive! The visitor said that Jesus had promised this to you, but you didn't understand it when he told you. Later the disciples understood that Jesus' death was the beginning of the death of death itself. For Jesus did not stay dead, but rose from the dead to life. He was to show us a new wholeness in the midst of his brokenness.

The importance of the Resurrection

This new wholeness would be based on what we remember of his old life. He was hurt as we were hurt and went through everything we go through. So he could now sympathize with all that we have gone through, and not just sympathize but offer us a new life and a new hope, based on his conquering death.

Now our new whole wholeness would be based on Jesus' power to change us and not on our own power. Now our major responsibility is to live in that new life of relationship with Christ rather than trying to be good. Out of that relationship comes the transforming power of God in us. God begins a new work within us that we agree with, not only sweeten us, but also opening our eyes to the spiritual truths that form our world and change our souls.

The overcoming of death that Jesus did is also available to us, so that we needn't fear death any more. The life that flows from Jesus is more than an academic or intellectual perspective. It is the secret that so many are looking for in relationship to the One who set up life itself.

It is as simple as inviting someone to be your friend. It is as profound and life changing as every aspect of who we are is given over to the Author of Life for transformation and improvement. It has been called the Great Exchange. We give to God our brokenness, fears, and the reality of our neediness. God gives to us the life, the mercy, the journey of becoming whole and holy, that is, set apart for God's purpose and mission here in this city, in this place, in this time.

When we come to the Table, we recognize Jesus did a work that we cannot do for ourselves. That work was his sacrifice, his obedient life, his relationship to God the Father, and the gift of the Holy Spirit for every believer. When we take a little unleavened bread and little grape juice, we remember the cross, we remember the cost, but most of all we rejoice in the new life given us.

And no matter how broken we are feeling, we can give our lives to the one who is whole and holy. We can receive what we need from Him. Our Easter is a time to celebrate around our family's tables, and around this family table, of the life that Jesus has one for us at great cost.

Let us come to this table and re-affirm our trust and faith in Christ. Let us also come to our family tables today to do the same.

Let us pray.