

Sing It to Me Again

John 20:1-18

Easter – April 20, 2014

Pastor E. David Streets

Little Jimmy was having a particularly difficult day. As a three year-old it was asking a lot of him to be well behaved, all day, as his mother and father and two older sisters shopped at the mall, dragging him from one store to another and another. His little legs just couldn't keep up.

By the time afternoon arrived, he'd had all he could take. He acted out a bit. He whined and grew defiant. He tried to wander away. He touched things he shouldn't touch. His patience had run out. He fussed and started to cry, loudly.

His parents tried to quiet him. He got louder. Now other people were beginning to stare. "Was there something wrong? Was he hurt?" they wondered.

It was time to take him out of the store and back to the car. So Jimmy's dad picked him up and held him close, but Jimmy continued to sob. So his dad began to sing him a made-up song in a soothing voice:

"I love my little boy.
My little boy is the best little boy in the whole world.
I'm so glad that he's my son.
I love him so much."

Carrying Jimmy through the mall headed for the car, Jimmy's dad sang the made-up song again and again until little Jimmy fell asleep.

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My little boy is the best little boy in the whole world.
I'm so glad that he's my son.
I love him so much."

Finally they reached the car, little Jimmy fast asleep. His father opened the car door and placed Jimmy in his car seat without awakening him. When he buckled

him in the car seat, the click of the buckle awakened him and little Jimmy suddenly cried out, “Sing it to me again, daddy. Sing it to me again!”

Today is Eater. I sincerely doubt that there is anyone here today who has never heard before that Easter is the day that we celebrate as the day Jesus was raised from the dead. Is anyone hearing that for the very first time today? I don't think so!

Yet we are here, packed in, shoulder to shoulder, wearing our best clothing because we want someone to sing it to us again. We want to hear the story again. We want to be told once more, “He is not here, he is risen!”

We want to hear about these lost and lonely followers of Jesus who sulkingly make their way to the tomb, planning to care for the lifeless body of Jesus. We want to hear again that when they arrived the stone sealing the tomb had been rolled away, that when they went inside there was no body, only strips of linen and the burial cloth that had been around Jesus's head. We want to hear again that when Peter and John saw this, they believed.

We want to hear again how Mary was so distraught that she was convinced they had stolen Jesus's body; that she was so consumed by her grief that when Jesus spoke to her in the garden she did not know it was Jesus. And we want to hear again how Jesus called her by name, “Mary,” and then she knew and she called him by her favorite name for him, “Rabboni!”

We want to hear again how Mary then ran to the disciples with the news. Wait for it...: “I have seen the Lord!” I love that part. It gives me chills every time I say it.

We also want to hear the music of Easter, don't we? We want to be here when everyone in this packed room sings,

“Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia!”

and

“I serve a risen Savior; he's in the world today;
I know that he is living whatever men may say;
I see his hand of mercy; I hear his voice of cheer,
And just the time I need him, he's always near.

He lives, he lives,
Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way.
He lives, he lives,
Salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives.
He lives within my heart.”

and

“Low in the grave he lay, Jesus, my Savior.
Low in the grave he lay, Jesus, my Lord.
Up from the grave he arose!”

Oh, wait, we didn't sing that one today. I'm going to hear about that today over dinner. Someone will say, “Well, I just don't think it's Easter unless we sing ‘Up from the Grave He Arose.’ Why didn't we sing that?” As if I pick the music! And I'm going to blame Don Megahan. Erica and Toni will say, “Well, aren't you his boss?” And I'll say, “Yes, that's why I'm blaming him! Besides we're going to sing it next week.” And she'll say, “I won't be there next week!”

Why is this such a big deal? Because she wants us to sign it to her again and she wants to sing it with us again. She wants us to sing the story of Easter to her once more.

Friends, we are believers in Jesus Christ and this is our day. This is our day to be reminded that when Jesus was crucified on Good Friday it wasn't over. Rather, on Easter he was raised from death to life. This is our day to be reassured that what we believe is the right stuff to believe. It's true. Jesus lives! Sing it to me again!

On Easter we are reminded that this is God's world. God created it. God sustains it. God controls it. Yesterday, at Sherry Young's memorial service, we sang a song that I remember singing in Sunday School when I was 8 years old. It was called, “This Is My Father's World.” We sang these words again:

“This is my Father's world.
O let me ne'er forget

that though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let the earth be glad!”

Sing it to me again!

Easter reminds us that God is in control. I know that sometimes it’s hard to believe. When a student in Westmoreland County stabs his fellow students we wonder, “Where are you, God? Can’t you see what’s happening here?” And when a mentally-ill mother, who lived just across McKnight Road from here, takes the lives of two of her three sons, we wonder, “How could his happen, God? Are you paying attention, God?”

Do you know why we ask those questions of God? Because we believe in God. We can’t make sense of what has happened and we wonder if God can. We ask those questions because we believe that “Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.”

Sing it to me again.

Easter reminds us of God’s presence in our lives. When I was sick and hospitalized in September and October of last year, one passage of Scripture ran through my mind more than any of the others:

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
... you are precious and honored in my sight...”

Isaiah 43:2-4

What did we sing earlier?

“I serve a risen Savior; he's in the world today;
I know that he is living whatever men may say;
I see his hand of mercy; I hear his voice of cheer,
And just the time I need him, he's always near.”

Sing it to me again.

Easter reminds us that God forgives our sins. You've probably heard this before, but let me sing it to you again. Sin separates us from God. You know how when you do something wrong and it hurts someone you love and then they are mad at you, things just aren't right between you and that person. You are alienated from them.

That happens when we sin against God. Each sin moves us a little farther away from God. That distance, that separation, that alienation from God so troubled God that God decided to do something about it. God so desires that the distance between him and us be eliminated so he gave his one and only Son to suffer and die for our sins – remember, Jesus himself had no sin. The resurrection of Jesus accomplished the victory over the impact of sin and death and the power of evil in the world. Sing it to me again!

Easter provides eternal life for you, for me, for the world. Sin separates us from God and leads to death. Paul writes, “...the wages of sin is death.” If you sin, and we all sin, we deserve to die. But because Jesus, the perfectly sinless Jesus, died for us, we have the gift of eternal life. Paul writes to the Romans:

“For the wages of sin is death,
but the gift of God is eternal
life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

So we know that this is God's world; that God is in control of it even though we sometimes can't see him or recognize him working around us. And we know that through Jesus who lived and died and lives again we can receive forgiveness of sin and the hope, the promise and the assurance of eternal life.

Easter also reveals to us that the Kingdom of God will never end and that Jesus, God's Son, risen from the dead, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will reign on the throne forever. And if we are on God's side, if Jesus is our Savior, then we are on the side that wins in the end.

You see the story of Easter includes a struggle between the forces of evil in the world and the forces of good in the world. You may think of a battle between the forces of darkness and light, a conflict between Satan and God. So the issue was, would we live in a world ruled by Satan, a world of hate and evil; or would we live in a world ruled by God, a world of love and acceptance, a world of hope and joy, a world of good.

When Jesus overcame death and came back to life, he achieved the victory over Satan and evil and sin and death. But not just one time but for all time.

Easter reminds us that this is God's world, he created it, he controls it, death cannot stop Him. His son, God's Son, Jesus Christ is on his throne as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and, wait for it,

“And he shall reign forever and ever.”

Sing it to me again. Alleluia, Amen.