

Easter Sunday (B)

April 8, 2012

Our lives are a mixture of both sorrow and hope. And like our lives, Easter tempts us to hedge our bets but also invites us to stretch our faith. The stories of the first Easter people are stories of people who at first were hedgers. We see Mary Magdalene, so tough standing at the foot of the cross but so hesitant as she sits outside of the empty tomb and cries, “The Lord has been taken from the tomb! We don’t know where they have put him!” We see Peter the rock who once told Jesus, “I’ll lay down my life for you.” But now he sits in the high priest’s courtyard just a few feet away from his Master’s torture. He’s a man caught in the middle and when put to the test, he hedges. “I know not the man.”

Even in today’s Easter gospel we note the hesitancy of the beloved disciple. Even though he beat Peter in the race to the tomb, once he got there, John hedged. “He did not enter but bent down to peer in.” The Easter story is not just about the resurrection of the Lord from the dead. It’s also the story about the people around the Lord who were raised to new life. It’s about all those people who went from being *hedgers* to *huggers*. At first the disciples of Jesus seemed to “half-believe.” But after they picked up the wrappings lying on the ground, after they put their perfumed burial oils back on the shelf, they gradually began to realize what Jesus had been telling them all along: that he was the presence of God who came to bring life to those who thought that life was a hopeless task.

The disciples looked back and remembered how Jesus had spent so much time and energy with those considered hopeless and dead: the lepers, those possessed by demons, the poor, the widow’s son, his dead friend Lazarus. Jesus sought them out, no matter where they were – Zacchaeus in the tree, Bartimaeus on the side of the road, the crazy man whose neighbors had consigned him to live in the tombs. To all the powerless who society had decided might as well be dead, Jesus brought life. Jesus never hedged. He hugged them with the power of God and brought them home.

The first Easter people were not so much concerned with the mechanics of Jesus coming out of the tomb. What they really were concerned about was the good news – that we who are baptized in Jesus are called to live like him. We are called to believe in the power and the presence of God despite the hedging that still goes on in our lives and in our world. We are called to choose life even when we smell death, to believe not in spite but in forgiveness, to reject the prince of darkness and all those agents of death who refuse to believe in the possibility of new life. We are called to hug the powerless and welcome back to life those who were lost.

Even though we're tempted to hedge, even though our lives are full of ambiguity, let's rise this morning with Jesus to new life and choose as our song a brand new *Alleluia!*

Paul A. Magnano

Pastor