

John 20:1-18 Easter

The first to experience the Risen Christ and to share the good news among us all...a woman...Mary of Magdala...bringing the Gospel from the tomb out into the world.

Fear and Death ...Change and transformation...Something new is born this morning...and it might be unrecognizable at first!

Mary becomes the first conduit of God's message of good news through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, as the risen Christ!

So how many folks here like change? How many of you go out of your way to seek it? There's a popular cartoon of a pastor looking out over his congregation and asking his folks how many of you want change here and everyone enthusiastically raises their hand...then the pastor responds ok Great now how many of you are willing to change? And all their hands go down.

I used to teach a business course about change and changing culture...I started out by saying most people resist change with every fiber of their being...and you will all change when:

A. it's inevitable

or

B. your survival's in question

...otherwise we like things to stay just the way they are...stable...safe...we can predict it...we can control it!

I more than anyone love to control things...I was a contingency planner for the Dept of Defense for 35 years...I like to think of myself as a person who loves to manage chaos...and let me tell you it's very, very, exhausting to try and control the entire world...especially in my own little head!

Whether climbing uphill or swimming upstream it's exhausting...because the more things look the same, the more they keep changing...

In fact change is the only thing that's constant...and many can see this if you take out your family photo album.

Look at yourself as a baby how did you relate to your parents...then in grade school...high school and so on...now your parents are changing too but look at how you related and thought of your parents in each of those times...and if you really want to see change and transformation look at your photo album as a kid then as an adult...you might not even recognize the person there. Change and transformation...and certainly fear and trepidation.

Now we generally don't get too upset over our bodies changing (not all of us anyhow) because science tells us how humans grow...so we are not too surprised by those changes...and as we grow we certainly know where we are headed... at least physically - we know that old age for most of us and certainly death for all of us... that's where we are all headed to the grave...even though we continue to think we can control and cheat the inevitable.

But less noticeable...less noticeable, is the transformation that is also happening inside each one of us...science knows a lot less about that. Especially our spiritual growth!

Some things in nature show us and point to a more drastic "speeded up" transformation...God leaves us some clues in creation...look at a butterfly in its early stages it's basically an eating machine...the very hungry caterpillar...its only purpose in life is to consume as much as it can...not unlike many humans on the planet...but then it goes into a dark place, dies to its original form and purpose... and then is literally transformed into something that looks entirely different and with a different purpose as well.

Now re-creation not only of itself, but of the world around it through its own reproduction and pollination to reproduce flowers and oh how beautiful it and our world becomes as a result!

I often wonder why the disciples don't recognize Jesus upon his resurrection or more likely His transformation. The dark container is empty...so what emerges from it? It's not Zombie Jesus...a caterpillar doesn't look like a butterfly...an acorn doesn't look like an oak tree. The thing that emerges recreated somehow looks different than the thing that creates it.

Is this a foreshadowing to come of our own transformations as well?

And today we also connect Jesus' resurrection to our Baptism...our spiritual transformation.

Why?...Baptism is not a "get outta hell free" card...Rather its' to acknowledge and share ritually in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus...and to recognize that we also, throughout our lives, move towards God in our own spiritual growth and transformation. We all have the very real potential to become a conduit for God in the world!

Let me give you an example to illustrate what I am hinting at...anyone know what a record is...or how about a cassette or 8 track tape?

I remember first getting a tape deck... they were awesome...you could fast forward rewind and record...you could make mixes and share them you're your friends...you could carry them anywhere and even have them in your car...but remember the vinyl zealots...wanting to listen to Led Zeppelin raw...with all the scratchy noises...but the tape people made fun of the vinyl people for not getting with the times...

Then CDs came along...Wow look how beautiful they are...you listen to tapes...wow you actually have to wait to fast forward or rewind...mine happens instantly...but the tape folks said...you can only play those while

perfectly still or they'll skip...you can't exercise with them or put them in a car and they can break very easily.

Wow what's this? An iPhone... the digital age...but who wants to buy a single song...Pink Floyd is meant to be listened to as a three hour epic story. You are bastardizing the artist's intent...where's the artwork? And what if your computer crashes or you lose this with all your songs on it...

See we all get stuck sometimes... and we all cling to the things we get used to... and we defend our ways and attack the new ways on the horizon...and the people who embrace the new ways will use lots of energy pointing how in the dark ages and how rigid people are getting stuck in their old ways.

We keep saying NO...until we say yes...then we jump on board and now we defend our new ways with the same vigor...are you with me?

We get so caught up in the stuff...the mechanism...that we forget that what's MOST important here is the music itself...the music...the rhythms and poetry that have the power to touch our very souls!

And music speaks to us in a way that no other medium can... we can look at the types of music we listen to, to also inform us of our own journey and transformation...we listen to music based on our frame of spirit, don't we?!

Look at how we appreciate certain songs and how different types of music speak to us in so many ways and at so many levels. And then look at how we have matured in even what we listen to...take out the photo album again...is what you listened to as a child the same thing you listen to now...what and why has it changed?

So is it more important to talk about tape decks and CDs...or the music? And aren't all those mechanisms that play the music even just a shadow of what it is like to actually hear that same music LIVE! With all the nuances and energy that the performers bring...Think back on a concert you attended...can

a recording even come close to that energy, that spirit of experience and connection?

So let me ask you...what does God sound like in your souls... and more importantly what is God up to deep inside of you? How are we being changed and how are we being open to it.

Fear is saying no to our own evolution...we say things like...what if the tape was the way to go? What about my CD collection? Transformation always starts from a posture of Love...a place of being open to change...a place where we say yes...not to the vehicle... or to the rules... or to the containers... but yes to the power of God's love and grace flowing through you.

Yes to the music... acknowledging God in all of it regardless of the playback mechanism...and then more importantly allowing that music to change who you are becoming!

You see my friends you are to become the very conduit for the music of heaven on earth. You say yes...Amen to God... because God comes to dwell and live inside each one of you...Now Baptism is the first time we say yes for our little ones....but we will have to say yes...Amen... over and over again in our lifetimes...but not yes I love my tape deck, not yes I love my CD collection, or my iPhone...but a resounding yes to the music of the living God dwelling inside you... so that you can become the new conduit for voicing and singing God into this world...today. God knows we need some grace, peace and love in the world right now.

...and while we are all on this journey of transformation remember to honor each other as well... know that many of us are listening to music at many different levels depending on where we are in the world, and depending on where our spiritual journey has taken us...it doesn't mean they have the wrong player...or even the wrong song...it just means that we are all at a

different stages in who we are becoming...and we are all diverse in making up the Body of Christ! (Different instruments)

...so have ears and hearts to hear and then allow God to transform you from the inside out.

May you all come to know the power of God's love flowing through you this Easter... and when you are finished consuming the ways of this world may you come to be transformed into the beautiful souls you are all destined to become...

The Lord has risen, the Lord has risen indeed...and inside each one of you...the Lord is risen indeed... right here... right now!

Amen...Alleluia!

Your faithful servant,

carmen