

Let Easter Come

April 20, 2025 – Center Harbor Congregational Church

Rev. Dr. Cathryn Turrentine

Several years ago, I told you the story of a visit to New York City. Dave and I just wanted a weekend away, so we visited with Dave's brother and his family, who live in New Jersey. We saw a Broadway play, and we went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was a great weekend.

I remember that it was a chilly spring day. I had left my coat in the car, and we had a long way to walk to the museum. Once we were inside and I warmed up a little, I found that I was overwhelmed with the art all around me. It was hard to wrap my mind around all the beautiful and challenging pieces I saw there, difficult to let any one of them sink in because there were just so many great works. That was, until I came around a corner and found myself suddenly face to face with a huge painting, almost 10 feet tall. I have spent quite a bit of time online this week, trying to figure out which painting this was. I think I have finally found it: It's called *Lamentation*, by Scipione Pulzone, painted in 1591.

In this picture, Jesus' body is being taken down from the cross by those who loved him. All the people around Jesus are shown wearing rich, dark colors. I don't remember their faces at all. I just remember that in the middle of this circle, Jesus' body was gray. Just gray. There was no life left in it. It was startling.

And I realized for the first time that in all the other paintings I had ever seen of this moment, Jesus had looked as though there were still just a little bit of life left in him. Just the slightest tinge of pink to carry him through to Sunday morning, as though his death were just pretend. But this painting made clear what the Bible tells us. Death had claimed Jesus. There was no life left. It took my breath away.

I carry that image in my heart every year at Easter. Jesus had just been through such suffering. He had finally been released from betrayal and abandonment. The physical torture had finally stopped. His body was still scarred, but the pain was in the past. And every year, I wonder what it took to get from that moment on Friday, to this one on Easter morning. From death, real death, to a new and transformed life.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Lazarus cried. I don't know how Jesus felt about the Resurrection. But I do know that new life came, and nothing could stop it. A new and transformed life that the grave could not contain. Easter came to Jesus, ready or not, because nothing in this world could hold back the explosion of Godly love and power that crushed death that morning, not just for Jesus, but for all of us.

Easter came to Jesus' weary, broken body. Easter came to the stone that sealed the tomb. Easter came then to the women who followed Jesus, and from them to the disciples, who mostly refused to believe – or even to hope – that it might be true. Easter came. Jesus had been dead. But he was risen!

Just a week earlier, on what we call Palm Sunday, as Jesus and all the people paraded joyfully into Jerusalem – Roman occupied Jerusalem – you could feel that the Kingdom of God was coming for the Roman Empire, and that everyone in Jerusalem knew that the Romans would use every tool of earthly power to crush the Jesus movement. On Friday, it looked like they had won. But here we are on Easter morning, and we can see clearly: the Kingdom of God won the battle. Jesus, the Promised One, the Christ, triumphed over the powers of earthly oppression. He defeated even death itself. It was glorious!

You would think this would change how we live our lives. You would think that living in the Easter world would feel a lot different from the world before. But we don't let ourselves go there, do we? We carry

around these little places of doubt and discouragement in our hearts. We let death occupy us when we should be living in whatever time we have been given here on earth. We push back against the Easter that we need every day.

But Easter is coming, no matter whether Easter dinner is ready or not.

Easter is coming, even if the sermon isn't finished and the bulletin is full of typos.

Easter is coming, especially to the parts of our lives that we try to hide from our own knowing.

Easter is coming to crush whatever we fear most.

~~~

So, let Easter come.

The light of Easter morning is here, even if you weren't awake to greet the sunrise. Let it shine in the corners of your life that feel dead. Let Easter come.

Crocuses and daffodils are pressing their heads through the cold crust of earth in which they have lain dormant all winter. Let the thought of them overwhelm the gray in your life. Let Easter come.

We have heard glorious music this morning, retelling the story. Let those melodies fill the silent corners in your heart. Let Easter come.

Let Easter come to your loneliness, your depression.

Let Easter come to your morning coffee and your evening rest.

Let Easter come to your illness, to your grieving.

Let Easter come to everything you worry about.

Let Easter fill your wishes and your prayers.

Let Easter come, and grab it with both hands.

The Kingdom of God has won the battle. Death will never again have the final say!

So, let Easter come and fill your life. Let Easter transform the way you greet each day. Let Easter fill every corner of your heart.

Let Easter come!

Let Easter come!

Let Easter come!

Alleluia!