

Let us pray.

O God of Love, O God of Truth;

Let us say strong things gently and gentle things strongly.

Let us speak the truth in love to all
and love the truth that lives in each.

Let us hear the truth as we each need it and live that truth.

O God, we heed it through Jesus; Your Word & our Lord.

Amen.

Something Borrowed, Something New

Luke 23:50 - 24:3

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, from Arimethea, who was a member of the council who condemned Jesus, but he hadn't agreed to their plan of action. He was a person of faith who awaited with great expectation the coming of the kingdom of God. Joseph approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He took it down (from the cross), wrapped it in clean linen cloth and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb which was planned for someone else.

Now it was the day of preparation and the sabbath was beginning. The women followers of Jesus, went as well, to see the tomb where Jesus was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments for his body. Then, on the sabbath, they rested.

On the first day of the week, early at dawn, they returned to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away but they did not find the body.

The other day grandson, Ian, was bitten at pre-school.
He reached for a communal truck in the sandbox
and a little girl bit him on the shoulder.

Immediately, I thought of the notion of “ownership”.

Our sense of ownership starts when we are very young.
You can tell it's beginning, at about 1 ½ yrs. old,
when children start shouting, “Mine, mine!”

Psychologists say this is an important and necessary
phase to develop a strong sense of individuality.

Then, around 2 ½ years old, if you're lucky,
things begin to change.

Children more spontaneously and frequently
begin to share and are less self-possessive.

They begin to include others with kindness.

This makes perfect sense in the light Ian's biting.
He's 2 ½ and the oldest in his class,
Margo, his “Bite-er” is younger,
and still stuck in the need for private ownership!

What this says about the maturity of America
I shall leave to speculation.

But the fact is, we have a strong sense of ownership.
65% of all American homes are privately owned.

Over 60% of all American land is privately owned, and now, one of the fastest growing areas of real estate is owning the water rights and mineral rights UNDER the ground.

Then there's above the ground.

And farther still, above THE PLANET.

And we are caught in an international debate about who owns the moon, the planets, the asteroids.

Although, when it comes to "space junk", NO ONE takes ownership!

When it comes to transportation, 88% of Americans own their own vehicle, 2nd only to Italy.

Lately, one of the hottest topics of ownership is "Intellectual property" which has had enormous repercussions with our international relations.

And don't get me started about gun ownership. Americans own more guns than entire countries put together.

And that's because so many think they need to protect WHAT THEY OWN.

It is irrefutable - we are driven by a ethos of ownership. Many idolize the notion that this or that is "Mine";

I own this. I can do what I want with it.
I paid for it and I control it.
It is my god-given right to do so.

In 2004 by Pres. Bush put a positive spin on all this.

**“If you own something,
you have a vital stake in it’s future.
The more ownership there is in America
the more vital we are.”**

I’m not here to debate economics, politics or psychology.
But spiritually speaking, our sense of ownership
may come back to bite us! Like it did for little Ian!

No one has any god-given right to ownership,
Because ownership is ultimately and completely God’s.
The bible touts this numerous ways.

- Psalm 24: *The earth is the Lords, and the fullness thereof.*

- Prophet Haggai preached,

‘Thus saith the Lord,

‘the silver is mine and the gold is mine.’

-Leviticus declares,

“Land shall never be sold permanently,

for the land is Mine (saith the Lord);

and you are just aliens and refugees

(And I allow you to live upon it)”

We may think ourselves owners of our own lives,
but Psalm 139 reminds us:

*“It was you, (God) who formed my inward parts...
Wonderful are Your works.
(And) in your book were written all my days
before any of them existed...”*

You see, spiritually speaking,
we usurp God’s power and privilege
when we think we own anything.
God is the ultimate owner.

But the message of Easter takes this one step further.
If God is the ultimate owner,
Jesus is the ultimate borrower.

Reflect on his lifestyle.
He owned no home and instead
relied heavily on the hospitality of others.

And when Jesus sent out his disciples to be missionaries
these were his marching orders.

*“Take no purse (for your money), no bag (of clothes)
no (extra) sandals...but when you come to a house,
say, “Peace upon this house”.
And if they return your peace, stay there.
If not, shake the dust off your feet and move on...”*

He lived this way to enhance and encourage
spiritual vulnerability and social generosity.

When we are in need, God is closest to us.

When we live by our own sense of ownership,
God becomes more distant.

But Jesus - as the great borrower -
goes deeper than just ethics.

It is supremely existential.

He was born in a borrowed womb,
and he died in a borrowed tomb!

The Christmas story talks about the “borrowed womb”.

‘And the angel said to Mary, do not be afraid.

God has found favor with you.

*And you will conceive in your womb, a baby, a son;
and you will name him Jesus.*

...The Holy Spirit will come over you

and your child will be born holy...” (Luke 1:30 ff)

|The Easter story talks about “the borrowed tomb”.

Joseph approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

*He took it down (from the cross), wrapped it in clean linen cloth
and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb which was planned for someone
else.*

Birthed in a borrowed womb,
buried in a borrowed tomb -

the sacred meaning of Jesus' life
is to be God's holy parentheses around all life.

The beginning and the ending,
the Alpha and Omega.

And within those parentheses is meant to be YOU!

Jesus wants to borrow each of us.

He wants to borrow our hearts and minds.

He wants to borrow our pain and suffering.

He wants to borrow our body and soul.

He wants to borrow our every thought, every day.

He wants to borrow our every mistake,

our every flaw, our every action, our every decision.

Jesus is the great borrower.

And not like when I borrowed my college roommate's car
and returned it to him with a dent in the bumper!

No! When Jesus borrows things,

he returns them, not worse than before,

not even the same as before,

BUT BETTER THAN BEFORE.

And this, friends, is the Easter message full blown!

Easter is the power of redemption.

Easter is belief in the resurrection of what was

and the raising up and renewal of what will be.

If we let him borrow our hearts and minds
we get them back filled with compassion
and enlightened with wisdom.

If we let him borrow our suffering and pain,
we get them back bandaged with new meaning & hope.

If we let him borrow our flaws and sins,
we get them back forgiven
and wrapped in a bow of grace.

If we let him borrow every day of our lives,
he returns them to us
filled with a profound sense purpose,
to spread the power of love
and blossom the courage and hope
we need to live into the future.

This quote by C.S. Lewis captures the power of Easter.

**“I believe in (the risen) Christ, like I believe in the sun.
Not because I can see it,
but because, by it - I can see everything else (better).”**

In closing, on the church calendar

Easter is the END of the season of Lent.

But frankly, today’s bible story reminds us
that Easter is just the BEGINNING of Lending.

Lending our lives to God’s great borrower
Jesus our Lord, who will return them renewed
and redeemed.

And the key Easter question is this:

How are you doing with your own ownership of life?

How's your marriage?

How's your family life?

How is your health, body and soul?

How is your attitude toward life as a whole?

Is it time to let Jesus borrow your life?

PRAYER OF PASTORAL CARE Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Let us unite our hearts in prayer, saying, God of Resurrection, hear our prayer.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, that as we celebrate the feast of Jesus' resurrection, we may renew our faith and strengthen our witness in Jesus' name. May churches large and small know that where two or three are gathered in your name, you are there in your risen presence. God of Resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for pastors, for teachers and for all who minister in your name. May clergy and lay share the joy of serving you, and of reaching out to those close at hand, and to others at a distance, in your name. May all be wise in leadership, humble in service, and fearless in the face of evil. God of Resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the governments of the world and their leaders, for President Joe Biden, Governor Phil Scott; for all governors, and those serving in national and state legislatures. May they practice compassion and justice for the well-being of all. God of Resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the United Nations and for all nations of the world. We thank you for all who endure in praying and working for peace where there is violence and war. May leaders and nations reject the politics that use death and suffering as means of control. God of Resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our planet Earth, that people may be good stewards

of its resources and share in its abundance. We pray for the homeless of our world, for refugees, for the poor and the stranger, that they may receive refuge, hope, and hospitality. God of Resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our neighbors, that together we may dwell in harmony; and for our enemies, that we may love them, and be agents of reconciliation in the name of Jesus.

We pray for the sick and those in distress. Be with all who wrestle with addictions, and for all who are troubled in mind and in spirit that they may have the energy to live and to thrive. May they find healing for their pain and be restored to fulness of life.

We bring before you those on this church's prayer list.

Almighty God, receive these prayers we offer, and by the power of your Holy Spirit, use us for the sake of the good news of Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

OFFERING *Sanctus*

God has given us life in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In gratitude, let us offer our hearts and the fruit of our labor to God's service.

*DOXOLOGY

*PRAYER

Almighty God, by your grace, accept the fruit of our labor, and the offering of our lives in union with our risen Lord who lives and reigns with you forever. Amen.

Agnus Dei

