

Easter Sunday 2020

Holy God, in the stillness of this dawn, with the sounds of nature awakening, open our ears and awaken our hearts that doubt might be rolled away and the bright light of Easter joy dawn within us and all around us. Amen.

John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important Early Church Father. He is known for his eloquent preaching and public speaking and his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders. He lived from 347 to 407. One of the things that he said was this:

And I quote: "Such is the power of love: It embraces and unites, and fastens together not only those who are present and near, and visible, but also those who are distant.

And neither time, not separation in space, nor anything else of that kind, can break up and divide in pieces the affection of the soul".

These words are so important in this time of COVID-19. Love truly does span all time and distance. Admittedly, many of us are still trying to figure out what love looks like in a time of social distancing.

Last week, Rebecca Mehra, a professional runner, tweeted out a story of an elderly couple in their 80s who were sitting in their vehicle at the grocery store, and they asked her to get their groceries for fear of catching the virus. Barbara said that: "I bought the groceries and placed them in her trunk, and gave her back the change. She told me she had been sitting in the car for nearly 45 min before I had arrived, waiting to ask the right person for help".

Other endeavors from across the country have popped up in recent headlines over the past few days:

--The Coronavirus won't stop the delivery service; 'God's Love' from providing over 4,600 medically-tailored meals to New Yorkers in need.

--Tiny food pantries in Beacon NY are helping fight hunger amid coronavirus outbreak

--California inmates make face masks to distribute in hopes to curb virus spread.

--Anonymous New Orleans artist leaves uplifting messages on sidewalk outside hospital

--and Nurse delivers snacks and coffee to fellow health care workers.

There are headlines like this all over the country in the past couple of weeks. People showing Love in social distancing. Yes, as is often the case, there are scammers and dishonest people taking advantage of others in order to make money. But there are so many, many people who are trying to do the right thing and to help those they can. All those frontline workers who are doing their jobs despite the risk. The National Guard who is doing their part often away from home. For almost all of us, the path we are now on is unlike anything we have dealt with before.

I have to be honest. COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for many Christians. We got used to worshipping in our churches every Sunday morning, many of us finding ways to receive the Blessed Sacrament together as often as we could. It is not surprising to me how easy it became to get into a routine. A routine that most of us were not aware of. Not being able to meet in buildings and in-person has caused us to redefine what it means to worship God and to be Jesus for and with each other. Many of us needed a wake-up call. The Resurrection is that wake-up call and it is a shake-it-up kind of event. It is time to wake up, get up, and move. The tomb is empty. Jesus has risen! **Time to go to work.**

I had read somewhere that many churches throughout the world, on Easter Sunday, share the well-known Easter Sermon from John Chrysostom. I guess that I didn't know it was a thing. I want to share this sermon with all of you this morning.

"An Easter Sermon

Are there any who are devout lovers of God?

Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival!

Are there any who are grateful servants?

Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

Are there any weary from fasting?

Let them now receive their due!

If any have toiled from the first hour,

let them receive their reward.

If any have come after the third hour,

let them with gratitude join in the feast!

Those who arrived after the sixth hour,

let them not doubt; for they shall not be short-changed.

Those who have tarried until the ninth hour,

let them not hesitate; but let them come too.

And those who arrived only at the eleventh hour,

let them not be afraid by reason of their delay.

For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first.

The Lord gives rest to those who come at the eleventh hour,

even as to those who toiled from the beginning.

To one and all the Lord gives generously.

The Lord accepts the offering of every work.

The Lord honours every deed and commends their intention.

Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!

First and last alike, receive your reward.

Rich and poor, rejoice together!

Conscientious and lazy, celebrate the day!

You who have kept the fast, and you who have not,

rejoice, this day, for the table is bountifully spread!

Feast royally, for the calf is fatted.

Let no one go away hungry.

Partake, all, of the banquet of faith.

Enjoy the bounty of the Lord's goodness!

Let no one grieve being poor,

for the universal reign has been revealed.

Let no one lament persistent failings,

for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Let no one fear death,

for the death of our Saviour has set us free.

The Lord has destroyed death by enduring it.

The Lord vanquished hell when he descended into it.

The Lord put hell in turmoil even as it tasted of his flesh.

Isaiah foretold this when he said,

"You, O Hell, were placed in turmoil when he encountering you below."

Hell was in turmoil having been eclipsed.

Hell was in turmoil having been mocked.

Hell was in turmoil having been destroyed.

Hell was in turmoil having been abolished.

Hell was in turmoil having been made captive.

Hell grasped a corpse, and met God.

Hell seized earth, and encountered heaven.

Hell took what it saw, and was overcome by what it could not see.

O death, where is your sting?

O hell, where is your victory?

Christ is risen, and you are cast down!

Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!

Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!

Christ is risen, and life is set free!

Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead.

For Christ, having risen from the dead,

is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Christ be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

The Easter Sermon of John Chrysostom exists in many editions on the Web. This version was prepared by André Lavergne [editor@worship.ca]. Cf. The editions of Mark Baker and Frank Dobbs. Posted Easter, 1999. Revised Easter, 2001

A powerful sermon indeed and it is just as pertinent today as it was then. This is a message that we need to hear and to share with everyone who will listen. Every single person is welcome to the table. Every single person is loved by God. No one has been left out. If there was ever a time that the entire world needed to hear this message, it is now. We are the messengers. Wake up my friends! The tomb is empty! Jesus has Risen! Get up, and find a way to be Jesus to others.

AMEN!