

Easter Sunday B 2018.

If I had my absolute, unadulterated ‘druthers, the Easter Sunday sermon would be some holy combination of breakdancing and a wedding toast given by 80’s wrestling legend Ric Flair: unbridled joy punctuated by very articulate whoops. After all, this is our great festival day, the day the world is reborn, death overcome, the grave split open, and hell defeated and rendered obsolete. On Friday night we looked unflinchingly into the pit, into the dark of the world and the dark of ourselves. And today we are made alive again by love. Today love has overcome death and remade life. Love has made us new, remade us in its image. How can we keep from singing? How can we keep from dancing?

We should dance and sing. We should make fools of ourselves for the God who made fools of death and the devil. Carnival has come and the world is beating to the rhythm of the laughter of God. The tomb is empty, the Lord is gone, he’s gone on ahead of us to Galilee, where joy and work await us.

But there is a problem. God has told the greatest joke in history. God has laughed our Lord to life, and it’s met with terror and amazement by those best placed to get it. I’ve told jokes like that. The problem I think is being an Easter god in a Good Friday world. The Marys and Salome don’t get the joke, but it isn’t because they are unfaithful. It is because the remade world is at odds with itself. We, the world, are still at the tomb or even worse, are still making crosses and finding innocents to nail to them.

Easter has redeemed and defeated Good Friday, but Good Fridays keep happening. How can we dance when our children keep getting murdered? How can the empty tomb be good news if we know that crosses are still being made? These questions matter for us right now—we who have almost gotten bored with amazed terror. I sat here Friday night, during our long liturgical look at the grave, and I thought about the stories of grief and pain in the room. I thought about the ways our lives are broken, and the ways the world is broken. And I wasn’t quite sure that a party would mend us or the world. After this great party, this great festival day, we’re going home to diagnoses, and absences, and headlines of death and fear.

Here's the truth: the bedrock deep down truth of the world is that it is a world God loves. It is a world made and remade out of God's love, and this is the truest thing that can be said. Yes, it has room for amazement and terror and pain, but it is a world in which redemption has burst forth from the deepest pit. The worst that we or the devil or death can do is the place where God's love has become the strongest. There is no part of it that is beyond the redemptive work of God's love. And that redemptive love is shining shining into the corners and crannies of our lives and this world, making us alive again. We know this truth and so we dance. And the fact that some of our brothers and sisters resist this truth means that there's a defiance to our dancing. An invitational defiance that will not yield to despair, and invites all to join.

This dance starts at the empty tomb, but it cannot stay there. It starts at the deepest hurt redeemed, but Jesus has already gone out ahead of us. He is in Galilee waiting for us, waiting to commission us to teach the world to dance. Because the world doesn't know itself. It doesn't know its heart is a love that is stronger than death and will overcome the grave. The world keeps trying to live by killing and yeah, that's cause for terror and amazement. But even more our God is mighty to save, bringing forth life even where we try to make death, love where we sow indifference or fear, and hope where we thought was a grave. How can we keep from dancing? Alleluia! Christ is risen!