

“This is Our Story; This is Our Song: Possibility”

OT: Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
NT: 1 Corinthians 3:1-4
Matthew 28:1-10

Read Matthew 28:1-10

From a life of purpose and peace to perseverance and prophecy; from the palm to the passion; from a period of wilderness to a place glory; from the perplexity of the disciples to the pain of a mother; from the permission to take the body to the preparation of the body; from the pronouncement of the first to witness the empty tomb to the proclamation of the good news from the risen Christ himself; everything Jesus represents in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension reveals to us the culmination of our story and our song. Today, I am calling it possibility.

Albert Einstein once wrote, “It is better to believe than to disbelieve; in doing, you bring everything to the realm of possibility.”

I was playing golf this past fall with Chal Nunn and he shared a new perspective with me that I really appreciate. He called it being a possible-ist. Not an optimist or a pessimist, but a possible-ist: someone who sees the possibility no matter the situation and circumstance. And you know what? The more I have sat with that the more I have liked it. Thank you Chal. Some may say, that’s awesome, I can have some power over circumstance. True, but that is not why I have leaned toward it. The reason I lean toward it and have been reminded of this more and more throughout this Lenten and Easter season is because nothing brings possibility to life more than having faith and following Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Following Christ gives us hope beyond reason and logic, faith beyond the imaginable. How else can we describe putting our faith in a man, a God, who comes back to life after being dead? Who does that? God does! Jesus does! Our God! Our Lord and Savior! And that is not only good news for us, that is fantastic news for us.

Possibility! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the climax of our story and our song with God, especially here today on Easter, throws open the doors and windows of “possibility.”

“Sunday is a day to look at what you thought was previously impossible and push it forward into the present where it becomes possible.” Byron Pulsifer

Today is Sunday, but it is no ordinary Sunday. Today is Easter and it is all about celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ; God’s son; the Messiah; “the bread of life”; “the light of the world”; “the way, the truth, and the life”; “the good shepherd”; our Lord and Savior.

And Jesus said, "With God all things are possible."

So, because of our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and the work God does through Jesus to redeem, reconcile, and renew us as God's children, our story and our song hits its peak at possibility. To unpack this more, let's consider what the resurrection of Christ makes possible. The belief that God raised Jesus from the dead is the main foundation in which the Christian faith stands.

The resurrection of Christ makes possible that all the prophecies foretold were true, for Christ was the fulfillment of God's promise and word...

The Resurrection revived the faith of his disciples. Although Jesus told of his death and resurrection, his followers did not understand nor accept this as a possibility. The death of Christ seemed to suggest that God's plan for salvation and the establishment of the kingdom of God failed. The disciple's hope was shattered by his death. His resurrection and witness thereof reaffirmed God's faithfulness and revived hope and faith in Christ.

The resurrection of Christ makes the Christian church possible...

The resurrection of Christ makes it possible for the cross, an image of suffering, to become an image of life and hope...

The resurrection of Christ demonstrates that the Cross was a victory. Jesus allowed the evil powers to do their worst to him but through the resurrection we understand that they were defeated. Had Jesus not risen from the dead, the Cross would have been the final defeat of God.

The resurrection of Christ makes possible the cleansing and forgiveness of all guilt/ sin...

The resurrection of Christ makes possible a new creation, new heaven, new earth for Christ as well as for us, those who trust and believe in him...

The resurrection of Christ gives meaning and possibility for ordinary elements of water, bread, and cup to become the extraordinary sacraments of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit celebrated as the living water poured over us, the bread of life broken for us, and the cup of salvation poured out for us. These elements are set apart for us to be reminded of God's true love for us...

The resurrection of Christ issues the possibility of God's peace, presence, and power to be in us and around us...

The resurrection of Christ makes possible what we might question or might not yet imagine as a way of life, impacted by the circumstances of today, leading us into the future. To illustrate this more I want to share a parable.

MaryAnn McKibben Dana, who was our retreat leader for the Clark Spiritual Growth Initiative in March shared the Parable of the Long Spoons recently in her blog, with an added section inspired by Dr. Brene Brown. If you are familiar with the Parable of the Long Spoons, I invite you to listen again with ears of possibility to hear something new.

I recently had a series of visions. In the first vision, I was led to the door of a large banquet hall. Before the door even opened, I could smell the most delectable food inside. I could hear dishes being placed on an endless series of tables. This was a large feast. My mouth watered. My belly grumbled. As my guide opened the door, I saw them. Row after row of guests, seated at the tables, not eating, glaring at the spread and one another. What was wrong? And then I saw: before each guest, a long spoon, three feet or more, much too long for them to grasp to get the food to their mouths. So, the bounty sat untouched, getting cold. Perhaps it would eventually spoil. Perhaps the people would starve.

In the second vision, there was a similar door, a similar banquet hall. Again, the aromas of a delicious dinner wafted through the door, which was finally flung open. But here, there was joy. There was conversation and laughter. And this time, of course, the guests were grasping their long-handled spoons, and they were feeding one another.

My guide told me that the first room was Hell—full of selfishness, competition, devoid of all imagination. And the second room was Heaven—a place of compassion and sharing and possibility.

...Then there was a third vision. The same guide led me to a new door, more modest than the others. There was something familiar about it. On the other side, warm and comforting aromas, though not the grand feast of the previous rooms. When the door finally opened, I recognized my own home. My family. A simple meal. And the same long silly spoons. But this time, everyone around the table grasped them at the bottom of the handle, near the scoop, and used them to eat.

“Well that’s an idea,” I said to the guide. “It’s a little awkward,” she answered. “But we make do with what we have right now.” “Yes, I suppose,” I replied.

“But why is it just us? Why aren’t we in the big room, all together with everyone else, feeding one another?” “Well,” she said sadly, “we need to do it like this for a while.”

“Oh, that’s too bad.” “Yes,” she agreed. “People can’t leave their houses right now. We have to stay away from one another. Even people we love.”

“Why is it like this?” “Big question. Complicated answer. But we must do this to take care of ourselves and one another.”

“Kind of a strange way to take care of someone.” She was silent. I watched the scene for a long moment. How did we get here? What did we miss along the way?

In time, I heard the guide move to leave. I’d forgotten she was there. “Wait, before you go,” I said. “You showed me hell and heaven. Which is this?” She paused. “Well, what do you think?”

I looked back at the scene and imagined so many others like it. And others not like it—smaller tables, tables with one person sitting at it, tables with not enough food, tables with an empty chair.

“This is all wrong. We weren’t built to do this. This isn’t what we were made for.” “You’re right,” she nodded.

“But it doesn’t really seem like hell, somehow...” I mused. “In fact, look at us. It’s kind of incredible, isn’t it? It’s easy to care for one another in ways that come naturally. But this... this is awkward. And hard. And lonely and uncertain. We don’t know what we’re doing or what will happen. Except... we know it hurts. Some people will lose a lot, maybe everything. The loss will be incalculable.” “Yes,” she said.

We stood there for another long time.

“But if we can pull this off...” “Fewer people will suffer,” she finished. “And if we can get to the other side, could we do things differently?” I pleaded. “Could we be so glad to see one another again that we’ll want heaven all the time? Could that vision of hell be...”

“Banished forever?” “Yes.” “Maybe,” she shrugged, and turned to go.

Could this be? Could a new way of life possibly be? With God and the power of the resurrection of Christ in us and around us, all things are possible.

Author and preacher John Maxwell writes, “If you embrace possibility thinking, your dreams will go from molehill to mountain size, and because you believe in possibilities, you put yourself in position to achieve them.”

"I Am They" have a song called "No Impossible With You." The first verse and chorus offer us these words to reflect on:

*Right now I'm staring down a giant... Right now I can't see past my pain
And right now my songs have turned to silence... And You've never seemed so far away...
But I still believe, I still believe...*

*There's no heart You can't rescue... No war You can't win
No story so over... It can't start again
No pain You won't use... No wall You won't break through
It might be too much for me but... There is no impossible with You*

*Your name is greater... Your love is stronger... Your ways are higher
There's nothing that You can't do... 'Cause there's no impossible with You*

"If we truly believe that we serve almighty God, then nothing is impossible with him." Kari Hackett

Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, so fragrant, so intoxicating, as possibility!"

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what possibilities does the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, make for you. Easter is God's gift to us of possibility because with God all things are possible.

Let all God's people say... Amen.