

“Eat the Pie! Share the Pie!”

Luke 24_1;12; I Corinthians 15:51-57 – Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – April 20, 2025

*Holy God, bless the speaking and the hearing of these words, that we might be people of
resurrection, proclaiming abundant life! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Things are getting real, my friends. The world has been Lenting at us really hard for a while now. So as we gather here today, let's make sure we're prepared to Easter with gusto. You all know that I like to express myself with food. So I need to tell you that I made two desserts for the potluck today. I had been wanting to make a chocolate zucchini cake for a while now, so I'd decided to do that last week. But as I read our scriptures for today earlier this week, I realized I had to make a pie too.

I love that passage from First Corinthians 15. “Listen! I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed. . . . Death has been swallowed up in victory. . . . Where, O death, is your sting?” I love it. We use it often at memorial services. But I really want to make sure that we don't misunderstand this passage today. When we get too tangled up in imperishability and immortality, it's easy to assume this is one of those readings that supports the “pie in the sky” version of Christianity. But this is Easter, my friends, today. This isn't about “by and by, we'll all go to heaven when we die.” This is about abundant life, right here, right now, for real. Even though we know the world is going to go on Lenting at us, we also know that Easter has come; Easter is here. Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

The women arrived at the tomb. It's the women, in every story, every version, with variations on who shows up later. The women are the ones, even in the depths of their grief, even before the sun has come up, who show up to do what must be done. The stone has been rolled away. That's odd, if convenient. But inside the tomb... no body. And then these dazzling personages show up with a timeless question: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Why indeed? Why do we look for the living among the dead? If the mystery Paul wanted us to hear was about pie in the sky, Jesus could have gone directly to heaven. But he didn't. He went to Galilee first. Or Emmaus. Or maybe just Jerusalem, or the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. Where isn't exactly the point. He went places and met the disciples and had dinner and breakfast, something the dead don't usually do. I don't know if there was pie, but that is also not the point.

It's Easter today, and we proclaim Life! Life abundant, Life persistent. We do not seek this life among the dead. We do not look to the death-dealers to provide such vitality of spirit. We will not wait; we proclaim Christ risen today! This day we will eat pie. This day we will share pie with our friends and neighbors.

Last week, we concluded worship with a song that included the line "All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned." I almost decided to skip that verse, in service of the ideal three verses rather than four. But the Spirit didn't let me, and now I know why. It was foreshadowing. We cannot look for the living among the dead. We cannot turn to the forces that repress and violate to bring about human

flourishing. Christ is risen, and we proclaim Life Abundant! The darkness is still swirling around us, the forces of death and the fomenting whispers of fear sweeping through our streets. But we proclaim Life, and we proclaim with our living.

There is a famous recording of the group Sweet Honey in the Rock singing “Ain’t That Good News” at a concert in a church. In the middle of the song, the group’s founder, former Freedom Singer Bernice Johnson Reagon starts giving a sermon. She says, “It’s good news when you reject things as they are; when you lay the world as it is and you take the responsibility of shaping your own way, that’s good news. Everybody’s talking about spirituals, and they say, ‘Oh Lord, black folks singing about going to heaven.’ No, this lesson is for you, tonight, November the 8th, 1980, in All Souls Church. Lay down the world, pick up my cross. And they don’t say it’s Good Times; they say Good News. It’s hard times when you decide to pick up your own cross. You gonna catch hell if you don’t do it the way they say do it. But when you lay down the world and shoulder up your cross, that’s what?” Good News!

Easter is Good News! It is the truth of life in the face of death-dealing repression. It is the persistence of life in the face of violence. It is the celebration of life in the face of fear-mongering. It is all of us gathered together to affirm one another’s humanity, to lift up the broken-hearted and rejoice with those experiencing blessing. Good Friday is God’s ultimate act of solidarity with us, walking alongside us even to the point of death. But now it is Easter, and God invites us to switch it up. ‘I’ve died like you; now come live like me!’

It is God who raised Jesus from the dead. But we are made in the image of God, and that same insistence on Life dwells within our Spirits. That same desire for abundant life, not just for ourselves, but for everyone, is part of who we are. Easter invites us to proclaim that solidarity in the face of forces that want to divide and conquer us. Holocaust survivor and scholar of totalitarianism Hannah Arendt warned us that “the death of human empathy is one of the earliest and most telling signs of a culture on the verge of descending into barbarism.” But I would argue that lack of empathy is also the Achilles’ heel of fascism because it causes its practitioners to make the mistake of misunderstanding those whom they seek to dominate. In their refusal to see the full humanity of those they have tried to “other,” they convince themselves that it is somehow possible to completely repress the human spirit with violence and fear.

But it is Easter, and Jesus has reminded us of the central truth of the human spirit: we are made to proclaim life and life abundant! We do not seek the living among the dead. We do not turn to fear-mongers and death-dealers to facilitate human flourishing. It may not feel like good times, we have this Good News. We have it today. We will eat the pie now. We will share the pie today. We will make another pie soon, when need arises. We will protect the vulnerable. We will care for the mortal bodies of our neighbors. We will cry Hosanna with those who need saving. We will shout Hallelujah in the face of those who would make us afraid. Happy Easter, my friends! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah and Amen!