

“ Jesus said to her, “Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”

(John 20:17)

Jesus' resurrection was an incredible moment in time. It changed the world. History was made. The problem is that no one was there to see it or witness the moment he rose from the dead. We do read the witnesses of those who saw Jesus alive and in the tomb, but his actual resurrection occurred some time during the night. And no one was thinking there would be a resurrection either.

What we have is the new life that Christ is alive and is born anew! We could hardly miss the Easter moment with all the business we had going on around the church during Holy Week and on Easter morning. The Easter breakfast went well and all were fed. The kids had their Easter Eggs that they found throughout the building. But what if you weren't here to see or hear all about this resurrection? What about those who are not active within a church congregation? We kind of need to be looking in order to see the resurrection.

Now, there are those in our world who prefer to see Christ and the resurrection outside of the church. Some people want to spend more of their time in contemplation and less time in the active ministries. Some even want to see God within nature and less time within the sacred texts of the Bible.

This younger generation would seem to care less about what happens inside a church sanctuary and more about what happens outside the church's doors, and more about the cycles of the earth. I guess we could conclude that spirituality is an ongoing personal journey. Covid also had a lot to do with the changes we have seen in the church.

In an article written by ELCA Pastor Peter W. Party, he states that there are ways in which we can react to so many people within the congregations not returning to the ministers of the church. We must acknowledge that people's lives are very busy these days and that weekends are very active. The church doesn't seem to be very high on the priority list of many.

Marty states that restarting ministries since Covid is hard, but not impossible. Andrew Root, another theologian in the ELCA states, “ we now live in a time where the very idea that God is real and present in our lives is no longer accepted.” This is hard for us church-goers to understand. Marty continues that these are some things we need to keep in mind:

1. God has given the church a bigger and better hope than what the world lives by. We follow a light that is brighter than our own.
2. We need to still love our Christian community as it is. The church is the one place where we meet the living and present Christ.
3. Our church needs to welcome and accept people for who they are – and then love them into who they get to become in Christ.
4. Keep looking for ways to grow and share the bubbling energy that is very evident in our congregation when people come together around a shared purpose.
5. Delight in every sign of our congregation’s faithfulness. Fixating on who’s NOT in the sanctuary is a worthless and suffocating exercise. There is no convincing anybody of their need for Christian community. They need to want to have it. And their best chance for discovering that desire may come from observing the JOY that is in YOU!

There is lots of hope in the easter season here at Spirit of Hope! We continue to grow and we even have six more yellow card of family units that will be joining our congregation this next month! Thanks be to God! Be alive! Be present and be ready to shine your light so that others can see the works of the Lord through who you are in our church community!

Peace,

Pastor Tony