

The Road Less Traveled – April 14, 2017

As children's sermons go, I was particularly proud of it. It was Easter Sunday several years ago, and when I invited the kids to come forward, quite a few little bodies rushed to the front. The day before, wrestling with how to explain the Resurrection to children – some as young as 3 – I asked my wife for some help. I needed two halves of an egg. Not a plastic egg, mind you, but a real egg. I needed two halves, as if a chick had pecked its way out, leaving behind the evidence of its birth. I thought it was a good idea, the egg pieces symbolizing the empty tomb. The pieces also are empty, but the emptiness belies another truth – that somewhere there is new life.

And so Melissa went about trying to crack an egg in such a way that the contents could be removed without shattering the shell. With two good pieces in hand, I carefully rinsed them and placed them out to dry. I found a container and lined it with moss from one of our indoor ficus plants and gently laid the shells inside.

Armed with my props, I invited the kids up and told my story. They were fascinated by my makeshift bird's nest and seemed to get the message. All of them, I should say, save for one little boy. As I talked, he repeatedly tried to reach into the nest to pick up one of the egg shells. Several times I gently pushed his hand back so I could continue my story. He finally managed to slip his hand past mine and pick up one of the pieces, which he examined carefully and eventually tried to smell. That's when I took it back, telling him that it probably didn't smell very good.

I laughed about it later, my little wrestling match with a preschooler over an egg shell and consoled myself that at least the rest of the kids got it.

But the more I thought about it, I realized that he's the one who got it. I was talking about the Resurrection, after all. And in the end, I could talk about it all I wanted, but that wasn't what that little boy wanted. He wanted to touch it, smell it, taste it. He didn't want to hear it; he wanted to experience it. And he refused to give up until he did. I tried my best to stop him, but he would not be denied.

Critics of children's sermons will argue that they are a waste of time because the ones who get the message are often the adults rather than the kids. That Easter, I think that might have been the case. And the adult who finally got the message? That would be me.

I look forward to experiencing Easter with you.

See you Sunday.