

Does Easter Mean Beans?
(1 Corinthians 15:12-22, 54b-57, Romans 8:36,37-38)

Along a heavily traveled highway stands a huge billboard. On it a white bunny rabbit. Behind the rabbit a colorful wicker basket filled with artificial grass, colored eggs and jelly beans. Underneath a caption. "Does Easter Mean Beans to Your Kids?" Does Easter mean beans?

In the 1750's George Frederick Handel wrote an Oratorio called the Messiah. I love the part where the soprano sings, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand upon the earth. Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." It comes from the book of Job. "I know that my redeemer liveth." Joseph Bayly had a beautiful and loving son. But his boy died when he only five years old from leukemia. Out of that experience, Joseph Bayly wrote a book called, "A View from the Hearse." He tells that he went back the day after his son's funeral to thank the doctor for the loving care he had given to his son. As he sat waiting to speak to Dr. Wolman, the secretary beckoned to him. "That boy," she said, "has the same problem that your little boy had."

I sat down [he writes] next to the little boy's mother. "It's hard bringing him here every two weeks for these tests, isn't it."

"Hard?" She was silent for a moment. "I die every time. And now he's beginning to sense that something's wrong. . . ." "It's good to know, [I continued] isn't it, that even though the medical outlook is hopeless, we can have hope for our children in such a situation. We can be sure that after our child dies, he'll be completely removed from sickness and suffering and everything like that, and be completely well and happy."

"If I could only believe that," the woman replied. "But I don't. When he dies, I'll just have to cover him up with dirt and forget I ever had him." She turned back to watching her little boy push a toy auto on the floor.

"I'm glad I don't feel what way."

"Why?" This time she didn't turn toward me, but kept watching her child.

"Because we covered our little boy up with dirt yesterday afternoon. I'm in here to thank Dr. Wolman for his kindness today." Do you know what Joseph Bayly was saying? He was saying, "I know that my redeemer lives. And though death destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

There is another song in Handel's Messiah that I really like. It is where the full choir sings, "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." That verse comes from the book of Revelation. "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ." Ten years ago I watched a Mission Yearbook of Prayer and Study Video about the impact that Presbyterian missions have made in South Korea. One hundred and ten years ago there were no Christians in South Korea, but then Sam Moffett went there and stated a Presbyterian Mission. Today the majority of the population is Christian and the Presbyterian Church in Korea is the largest in the world. The video clip focused on a young woman going to college. In the tight Korean Society of the early 1900's women were owned by men. They had no rights. Then came the good news about Christ. It

opened hearts. And it society as well. Now women are able to participate in almost every part of life. "I want to thank the Presbyterian Church," she said, "for the freedom that is mine." You know what she is really saying? She is saying, "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of Christ, here, now in Korea, in some ways small and big, and he shall reign forever and ever."

For some, Eternal life means that what they do now might make change what happens when they die. Did you ever think that maybe it's the other way around? Maybe God's unconditional promise in Christ to welcome us after we die might make all the difference now? I challenge you to read the Gospel of John and count how many times Jesus says, "He who believes has eternal life." Not will have eternal life when he dies. He says, "Has eternal life." Now! Today! It makes all the difference now. Joyce Rupp grew up on a farm. She had all sorts of time consuming, laborious, often boring chores to be done. One day, however, she discovered that she had a friend that went with her wherever she was. She talked to this friend, shared with her friend, joys and sorrows. "I would have conversations with my friend. Those conversations have continued all my life long and have become a source of incredible joy and strength." Do you know what Joyce Rupp is really saying? She is saying, "I know that my redeemer lives."

The world that crucified Christ believed in force, and vengeance, in exclusion and punishment. Christ believed that the meek would inherit the earth, that peacemakers would be called children of God. He believed in inclusion and in mercy. On Good Friday they killed Christ on the cross and mocked everything he ever stood for. What is it though, that we say we believe? You know. In the Apostles' Creed. What do we say? "On the third day he rose again." Resurrection. Meaning? It means that God has truly broken into our world, that grace and mercy have prevailed.

Does Easter mean beans and rabbits and brightly colored eggs? Sure it does. But Easter and the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Lord means far more than that. And so this Sunday and every Sunday we get to come and shout, "Glory!" We don't know exactly how, but we know for sure, Jesus Christ is risen today! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.