

John Sampson
"So Shall It Be Written"
Text: Jeremiah 31:31 - 34
Preached at KVCC
March 18, 2018

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you our rock and our redeemer.

What will Easter look like when it comes into our lives?

How will we recognize it?

Is it Easter because it says so on our calendars?

Is it Easter because we go to Hannaford's and the Easter candy has taken over the Seasonal Items aisle?

For me, one of the ways I know that Easter is almost here is that TBS, or one of those cable stations, always plays that movie The Ten Commandments starring Charlton Heston. There are many great scenes in that movie. But one of my favorites is how Ramses, played by Yul Brenner, runs around barking out orders. I love how he says: So shall it be written, so shall it be done. I love it!

But kidding aside, how will we know it is Easter?

Will it be Easter only if we find ourselves looking into an empty tomb?

Will it be Easter only if we have Jesus standing before us, wounded, but coursing with life?

Or might Easter arrive without us being able to recognize it at first because it comes contrary to our assumptions and our preconceptions.

How will we know it's Easter when it finally arrives?

Lent, the six weeks in which we follow Jesus to Jerusalem, and to the cross, and beyond, is a season that invites us to look at those places we would rather avoid. It shines a light in the darkness of our hearts, and our lives, and of the world. It is a journey into the brokenness of what it means to be human.

But the inner logic of Lent never ends there.

Lent also prepares us to see beyond the brokenness, and recognize the blessing when it finally comes. It teaches us to refine our inner gaze so that when Love arrives we will be

able to welcome it, even though it may come from a place we haven't expected, and at a time that doesn't mesh with what our calendars tell us.

Today our journey through Lent is coming to a close. Next Sunday we will hear the story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem for the final time before he is arrested and executed.

But today, on this Sunday, it's as if we are given a preview of what Easter might look like for us, in our own lives. We look beyond our brokenness and witness our hope. For the prophet Jeremiah tells us that we haven't been abandoned, that God still cleaves to us, and that she will do something wonderful. She will write her love within our hearts. Easter looks like a people who don't need to be taught who God is; they already know it within themselves. And they live their lives according to this fleshy truth. They live their lives according to the laws of love.

Throughout this journey of Lent we have been using the scriptures of our tradition to recognize the brokenness of our lives. But then we have raised our gaze off of the pages of our Bible and looked beyond into our world, and there, staring back at us is the truth of Lent. There staring back at us are the school shootings plaguing our nation. There staring back at us is racism right here in this town. There staring back at us are our youth telling us about their feelings of alienation and disconnection.

And there staring back at us are the dreams we have been working for all of our lives going up in flames. And there staring back at us is our inability to do anything about it.

Lent is a season of the church; it is also the struggle of our lives. But it is not the final word.

Our tradition tells us that the final word is "Easter."

That the final word will be the experience that happens in the days that are surely coming. In the days when after our hopes and dreams have burned down right in front of our faces our neighbors and friends, and even those we don't know, will come to our aid and help us build new dreams and new hopes. The final word will come in the days when our community meets together to have hard discussions about the place racism has in our community, and how we can more deeply and profoundly resist it. The final word comes in the days when we hear our youth describe their virtual experiences and find ways to help them feel more connected and valued. The final word will come in the days when we as a nation work together to end the madness of the shootings that are taking our children, and loved ones, from us.

And these days that are surely coming don't have to wait for any special Sunday on the calendar. Because it is Easter every time we live into the love that God has already written on our hearts and work towards a future that is different from our past.

This is what our journey of Lent prepares us to recognize. It shows us that in all of the stories we have heard, in all of the stories that we have lived, the darkness and the

brokenness don't have ultimate power. That the seeds of something new are already present in the moments of our deepest despair.

What does Easter look like in your life?

How has God already written her love on the tablet of your heart?

How have you shared that love with each other?

Because the days that are surely coming are already here.

So shall it be written, so shall it be done!

Amen.