



Unity Church of Christianity
Easter Sunday into the Ideal
April 24, 2011

Howard Caesar

There was a man who went to visit a church for the first time. He was a business man and traveled around a lot. He was inclined to visit different churches he had never been to. He felt things really deeply. He attended one church for the first time. When the minister started talking and said something really profound, the man said, "Amen!" Everyone gave him an odd look as if he was really strange. Then, when the minister said something that was humorous, the man started laughing out loud. Again, he got odd looks. The lady next to him jabbed him and said, "We don't do that here." So then when the soloist sang a number and he just loved it, he stood up and applauded. He found out he was the only one. The lady jabbed him again and said, "We don't do that here." At the closing hymn, he belted it out. Then he realized that he was the only one who was really singing. Everyone else was mumbling. At the end of the service, people got up and said "hello" to those they know, but nobody talked to the man. Nobody welcomed him. He felt downtrodden. Finally, he went up to someone and said, "Excuse me, but what is it that you believe here?" The person said, "We believe in doing our duty and carrying our crosses until Christ comes again." The man said, "Well, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but if He does come again and ever visits this church, he's not going to come back."

I want to say that it's okay to sing out here even if you don't sing well. It's okay to applaud and laugh. Our quota is one "Amen" to a person, though. This is a place where we believe that the

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second coming of Christ is real. It is meant to happen, however, in you. It's a personal kind of experience. It happens in the inner workings of you. It ought to happen in a way in which you are able to want to be alive. You want to sing out loud and laugh and applaud and experience the joy and feel the connectedness of divine love moving through you. It feels so good, you can't contain it. That's the way it's meant to be. The second coming of Christ is real and is meant to happen. It's meant to happen in you, at a level of spiritual frequency, vibration, and connection with the Divine that is intended to be.

There is a stone that we are all called to roll away on this day. It's not a stone out there in the physical world. It's a stone that lives in us. It's the stone of limitation, fear, and whatever holds us back from coming out and shining like we're held to be in the mind of God. There is a resurrection of the spirit of God that is to be experienced. It is to take place in every one of us. It is in the sacred internal being of every one of us. That is a sacred movement. When you look at and understand Easter, we are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ—the rising up of that which can never be put down. It is symbolic of the spark of the Divine that is in you and me. It can never be snuffed out. Part of it is that we have to step into agreement and move forward with that.

If you are a questioning Christian, it's not a bad thing to be one. It's always good to be in inquiry. Scholars have uncovered things that have substance, and tradition has sometimes ignored that. There are other views and perspectives. We honor and respect all views and perspectives here. At Easter time, in particular, one of the questions that arises is whether Jesus was the only son of God, or whether Jesus was *a* son of God who opened to the full expression of the Christ—the Divine that lived in Him.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a pastor in the mid-1800s. He was also a great American philosopher. He wrote, "We have distorted our understanding of who Jesus really was. We do Him a disservice when we disregard His teaching and make Him something separate from what He said that He was."

Jesus said, in a number of ways, "Yes, I am divine. Yes, I am one with God. You want to see God, look at me. I'm the light. I live in the light and so do you." The kingdom of heaven dwells within you.

Emerson wrote, "Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Alone, in all of history, He estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates Himself in man and evermore goes forth to take possession of the world."

Gandhi came along about 100 years after Emerson. He was a Hindu and a sacred man. He went deep with God in his unique way. He said,

It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate son of God and that only he who believes in Him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, then all

of us were His sons. If Jesus was like God Himself, then all could be like God. My Christian friends have told me on more than one occasion that because I do not accept Christ as the only son of God, it is impossible for me to understand the profound significance of His teaching. I think this is an erroneous point of view and that such an estimate is incomparable with the message that Jesus gave to the world. For He was certainly the highest example of one who wished to give everything, asking nothing in return and not caring what creed might happen to be professed by the recipient. I am sure to say that if He were living here now, among men, He would bless the lives of any who, perhaps, have never heard His name, if their lives only embodied the virtues of that which He taught and of which He is and was a living example on earth—the virtues of loving one's neighbor as one's self and of doing good on a daily basis.

The apostle Paul said sort of the same thing, only very succinctly. "It's as simple as this. Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Let this consciousness be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Let this heart of love be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

One of the important things for us to remember is that we are all already spiritual beings. The challenge is not to become something else, but to live up to the best that is already within us—the God's seed that is already within us.

All of us need an ideal in life. We need a target to shoot for and move toward. An ideal is a motivating pattern that guides a person's life. Some people have lots of problems in their lives because they have never established an ideal consciously—a focus to go toward. A conscious ideal is one in which we are willing to measure our every thought, word, and deed up to. Once an ideal has been chosen it sets in place a pattern that will assist us and guide us. It will become a motivating influence in our lives. It helps us make choices at times when we're confused and uncertain. We go back to asking what the ideal is and what the target is.

Jesus essentially said to all of us, "Let me be your pattern. I'm offering you a way of life, and I'll be the pattern for that way of life. You just have to live your life according to the pattern I am offering." Part of that includes a decision that you have to make at a deep level within your own soul on this path that you're on. Jesus said, "I made that decision to follow a way of life and a pattern." If you recall, the way He said it was, "Know ye not that I have to be about my Father's business." He was saying, "I know my role and my mission, and I know who I am and why I have come. I will keep that in front of me throughout this life, and I will be always focused on that."

Jesus knew that He had a role to play in the world. The role that He had was to be the pattern, the ideal, the model, and the example that every person could look at and say, "I want to be that because He's reflecting for me the God that is in me." And that's what He sought to do.

Robert Fulghum is a well-known author and philosopher. He wrote, among other books, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. In that book there is a sort of Easter story about a kindergarten teacher who is known for her gift as a teacher. Everyone respected her for her

skills. For an upcoming teachers' conference, she was asked if she would have her class put together a skit or act of a myth or fairy tale and present it at the convention.

She took that on and went to her students, asking them what they wanted to do. They talked among themselves and came up with the well-known tale of *Cinderella*. The teacher was pleased with that because there are a lot of roles in *Cinderella*. They began to sort out who was going to do what, and everyone wanted to be Cinderella. Once they assigned all of the roles, they went to the other side of the classroom to those who hadn't received roles. It eventually came down to one child who hadn't a role. He was a small, overweight kid who got teased and didn't mingle well with the other kids. His name was Norman. The teacher said, "Okay, Norman, what are you going to be?" Norman said, "I think I'll be the pig." The teacher said, "Norman, there is no pig in the story of *Cinderella*." Norman said, "Well there is now." So they let Norman decide what the pig's part would be. No one knew how a pig would fit into the story of *Cinderella*.

As it turned out, Norman knew exactly what his part was. His notion was to go with Cinderella wherever she went and do whatever she did, so Norman was always there. Norman had no lines, but his face always reflected the action of the drama that was taking place. When things got worrisome, Norman got a worrisome look. When things got really serious, he got a serious look. When things were in doubt, he had an anxious look. He began to fill the stage with his presence as he moved around like this.

At the end of the performance, when the princess was carried off to live happily ever after, Norman stood up on his hind legs and barked. When this happened in rehearsal it was troublesome for the teacher. She said to Norman, "Even if there is a pig in *Cinderella*, pigs do not bark." Norman said, "Well, this one does." Now you can imagine what happened the night of the performance. There was actually a standing ovation at the end for the pig—Norman, the barking pig, who was the Cinderella in the story after all.

Word got around to those who didn't attend the convention. People were calling the teacher, saying they heard about this great *Cinderella* play and wondering what made it special. The teacher would say, "Well, there's a pig in it. Actually, it's a barking pig." The person on the other line would say, "But there is no barking pig in *Cinderella*." With conviction, the teacher would say, "Well, there is now."

What does that all have to do with Easter? Basically, it's a long way to get to the point that it was Jesus' message that you and I have a role. Every child in the skit had a useful role, which was something the teacher emphasized. It didn't matter what part you were playing, you just had to have a useful role. That was what Jesus was trying to convey to all of us. You're here for a reason; you have a role to play in the universal plan, and it is a useful role. It is time to realize that you are to be about the Father's business. It is a useful role, more so than you have previously been able to realize or even see for yourself. Perhaps the time has come.

We all have been given scripts in this life, and the script is what has happened to us in our lives thus far. It might be our family history, the experiences we've gone through, the painful things, the good things, or the mix and match of all of that to create our script or story.

Norman's story could be that he's different and barks like a pig. Or it could be that people didn't want to play with him. Jesus was saying that you are bigger than your story. We all are. You have a role to play in this life, and you are to be about your Father's business. You need to make a decision at some deep level of yourself.

Jesus could look at a person and see something in them that they couldn't see for themselves. Have you ever been around a person like that? Jesus was able to see the greatness of God in every soul because He knew the truth of them. He could see the seed of Christ. He so knew who He was that He could so know who you and I are. It was from the clarity of knowing who He was and knowing His true self that He knew that about us. He tried to waken us up to it, and that's the process that you and I are on.

He found a guy fishing along the seashore, throwing nets to make a living, and He said, "Come, I will make you fishers of men." He saw something in him and followed him, and he became a disciple. He also looked at a woman who had been prostituting herself in such a way that she found herself and remembered who she really was. She laid down that life and started a new life.

After Peter denied Him three times, Jesus didn't look at him with condemnation, but with a look that said, "I know who you are, Peter, and you're more than this. You're better than this." When he got that look, Peter fell to his knees and wept because he remembered who he was in that moment and who he had not been.

In the stories of Jesus, there are three pieces that are important: the trial, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. When you look at the trial, there wasn't just one trial; there were six of them. There were three that were civil and three that were religious. First, He went to Ananias, who was Caiaphas's father-in-law. After that, he went to Caiaphas. After Caiaphas, He was directed to the Sanhedrin, which was the equivalent of the religious Supreme Court of that day. After that, He was sent to Pilate. Pilate sent Him to Herod, who sent Him back to Pilate. He had six interviews and six questionings.

After all of that, they found that He had done absolutely nothing wrong. There was one little thing: He admitted to being the son of God, but not exclusively. In His teachings He said, "It's in every one of us. You, too, are the light of the world. The things I can do, you can do also. Even greater things than these, you will come to learn and know. It's in you—the kingdom of God." That was His teaching. He wouldn't deny it. He stood fast in it, because no one was going to tell Him who He wasn't. He stood for being a son of God, and they killed Him for it.

Jesus offered to all of us the person, the pattern, the path, and the promise. The promise isn't something that happened just in Him, but it's something that is meant to happen in you. The promise is that the same power that resurrected Jesus is here today, accessible to all. He used that

power to teach, heal, raise the dead, and transform lives. He did not hold back. No matter where He was or who He was dealing with, He gave His gift to the family of earth, whether it was going to be received or not. We all have a gift to give.

There's a story about a little boy named Billy. His friend, Jimmy, tells how Billy was always made fun of because he had Down syndrome. Jimmy was a gifted athlete, and everyone wanted to be on his team when they picked. Billy was always left out because he had Down syndrome. Around 5th or 6th grade, Jimmy set down the law. He said, "If I'm going to play these games anymore, Billy has got to play. Billy gets to be chosen first. When he's up at bat, Billy always gets a hit. Billy always gets to score and come home. Those are the rules, and then I play." And so they played.

As he got in high school, Jimmy was really good and his team was going to the state championship, which was being played at the state fairgrounds. There was a track and field meet going on at the same time as well. They had one other thing called "anyone's game," which were games that anyone could sign up for. Jimmy took Billy to these events at the state fair. He said, "Billy, do you want to do baseball or track and field?" Billy said, "I need more information." Jimmy explained the events and asked Billy which one he wanted to enter. He answered, "I want to enter them all." Jimmy was concerned because Billy couldn't run. He was really slow, but this is what he wanted to do.

At the 100-yard dash, all of the other kids blew by him. When they got to this finish line and saw Billy waddling in, they all started laughing. Jimmy got mad. Billy wasn't mad; he started laughing with them. Then Billy went to the 200-yard dash. Again, people blew by him, but this time there were comments made about Billy's stamina and that he should be given credit. After the quarter-mile, when he went all the way around, some of the people stood in the stands and applauded. When he did the half-mile it was a long wait. All of the runners waited at the finish line until they finally saw Billy coming. When he was about 100 yards from the finish, they all ran down the track, picked him up, and lifted him up on their shoulders. Those who had jeered were now cheering and carrying him across the finish line, celebrating Billy.

Jimmy realized the gift that Billy had given everybody who was at that track meet that day. Jimmy was gifted physically, but Billy still was a gift. If Billy hadn't been there, people wouldn't have had the opportunity to open up their hearts and see something sacred and beautiful that was in this kid. He wanted to persevere and just be the gift that he had to give.

Wayne Dyer said that when you take an orange and squeeze it, you get orange juice because that's what's in it. When Jesus got squeezed and went through a lot that last week, what you got was God. You got love and forgiveness. "Forgive them for they know not what they do," He said. That was all He knew; that's what He was made up of. When you and I get squeezed in life, we need to go back to who we are and allow the juices of love, peace, and joy that are inherent in us as children of God to flow forth. Jesus offered us all the person, the pattern, the path, and the promise. You are the person. The pattern is in you. The path lies before you. The promise is that

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the same power that resurrected Jesus Christ is here to resurrect you into newness and fullness of life. It's your decision.

God bless you all.