

Over the past several weeks, we've been considering the stories that had been told in the stained-glass windows here at first United Methodist Church, and today we turn our attention to these that are here at the front and we will take a look at them and see how their stories connect with the story of Easter and how both of them can shape the way that we live our lives. Today we begin with the image of the roses. You'll see those on both sides, the left and the right, a white rose and red rose in Christian art. The white rose is a symbol of purity and the red rose is a symbol of sacrifice or of martyrdom being killed for what you believe and we see in both of these images a picture of Jesus Jesus born without sin, living his whole life without sinning, without turning away from God, without separation between himself and the God who created all things and also offering his life death for our sake. We continue with the two characters in the middle. These are actually Greek letters on the left. What looks like an alpha and on the right what looks like an upside down u, you may know them as Alpha and Omega of course, respectively. We hear a reference to these letters in the scriptures in revelation chapter one,

I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord God the one who is and was and is coming, the Almighty,

Alpha and Omega, the very first letter of the Greek alphabet and the very last letter of the Greek alphabet. Remind us again of Jesus. The Gospel of John tells us in the very beginning of time, God was there, that Jesus was there. The word of God spoke into existence, all of creation and the Omega at the very end of time, again, God is there. These are on either side of the central image for us on this stained glass in the front, which is the crown, the crown, as you know, as an emblem of victory, of honor, of sovereignty and assign of royalty. We see references to crowns throughout the scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and I want to share a couple of them with you today. The first again from revelation of 14, then I looked and there was a white cloud on the cloud was seated. Someone who looked like the human [inaudible], he had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. This is in reference to the crown of Jesus. At the very end of time, he sits on the throne and we see that he's given a crown of glory cloud, crown of righteousness, and he is the ruler of all things. This is the crown of Christ.

It also might be our crown as well. Revelation chapter two says this, don't be afraid of what you are going to suffer. Look, the devil is going to throw some of you in prison in order to test you. You will suffer hardship for 10 days. Be Faithful even to the point of death, and I will give them you the crown of life, the crown of life that Christ offers for each one of us. This is the story of Easter that we might be offered that we might receive, that we might say yes to the crown of life. The Jesus, the one who rules all things offers this to us that we might share in God's glory,

but when I'm thinking about this story, sometimes I think that it's not always so exciting. Our lives aren't always filled with crown of glory and much less the crowns of any type and and, and today it's one of those days where it's cloudy outside and so some days when you see the front of the sanctuary, these are shining brightly, but today not so much and the same thing is true for our lives. Sometimes things are going really well in our life and sometimes not so much. Maybe this is a day like that for you. Maybe things aren't going well for you in your life and your family and your circumstances. I don't know the particular challenges that you face, but but you do,

and if you find yourself in a place like this than the story of Easter is for you because it's a story where God sees the darkness that God sees the mess that we get ourselves in, that sees the mess in the world and doesn't leave us to ourselves. God sees the darkness and since his son Jesus, to live among us together disciples and finally because God's Love was too much for people to be put to death on a cross and on the third day today be raised again and Jesus is raised for those dark times in our life. Jesus has

raised that he might drag us out of those with him as he rises from the grave. So also we might rise with Christ. The story of Easter is one that is good. News is God's response to the evil and the sin and the darkness in our world. It is hope for all time. It's hope for eternity. We hope that through Christ we trust and we have faith that God offers us the chance to live eternally with God after we die, a place where there's no more pain or suffering or death, but it also means hope for life. Now, a chance to even in the dark day is to remember that the worst thing that we can imagine is never the last thing. That our tears will be replaced with laughter.

That our confusion will be clarified one day that are broken. Relationships will be healed because in the power of Christ and the power of the resurrection, all these are stronger than evil and darkness. There is always hope, and this is what eastern means for us today. That the purity of Christ's sacrifice from the beginning of time to the very end of time, the crown of glory, the crown of power is offered to us that we might have life and that we might have it in a real and significant way. And the good news of Easter is that Jesus, the one who died lives forever and is seated on the throne and offers this life for us. A life that really is life and some of you may say, no, Andrew, that fat. That's a nice story and you've got to talk about it. It's Easter Sunday. What else are you going to talk about? But do you really believe it?

OK,

and I can tell you that I do believe it because I've seen it seen resurrection at work in your alive. I've seen things that can only be explained through the power of God happened here in this congregation. Come to pass here in Eldorado and I don't just believe in the resurrection. I'm counting on it, that the darkness in my life and in your lives is not the end. There was light and there was hope and there is something beyond that and not even that, but God walks with us through the dark times. God is with us and offers us life.

If you'd like to receive that life, it's. It's really a pretty simple thing to do and maybe for the first time for you or maybe the first time in a long time or maybe you offer your life to God every day, but just a simple thing to say, gee, I want to follow you. I make mistakes. Please forgive me. Fill me with your holy spirit and help me to follow you all of my days and on this Easter Sunday is a chance for us to do that again and so invite you to join with me in prayer. To get an attitude of prayer, you might open your hands, place them on your laptop to just receive God's spirit in, and if you want to repeat after me, you can. You could do that just quietly under your breath.

Yeah,

Jesus, I'm sorry for the times when I mess up. Anything in particular comes to mind just to offer it to God. Forgive me of my sin.

Yeah,

wash me clean and make me new. I trust you with my life. Please fill me with your spirit and help me to follow you in your holy name. Amen.