

Easter 2015 Oude Lutherse Kerk

Easter – *“His death as death’s undoing” God and sinners reconciled* ... Walking the streets of Amsterdam even today, even on Easter Day, one might still find it quite hard to explain these concepts of life and faith to most of the people walking the city together with us...

The problem starts with language already: Old words and images, which have for centuries transported and translated the mystery of faith, words and images like “Glory to the Father”, “God on high”, “mercy and grace”, “a stone shifted”, “death defeated”.....

There are few people left today, who by socialization or formal faith education, have gathered enough patience and knowledge, to listen to those strange words and ancient language, and to let the images unfold their message. It takes patience to let this happen and then recognize that, what does not fit right away (or perhaps never will fit) into our rectangular boxes of interpreting reality, is not senseless. The strangeness of words and images rather has to do with the very character of the “special”, the “holy”, the “different”, the “not from this world” of its content. The message of the Gospel has always been “strange” to this world. And consequently has always been phrased in “strange” images. To a degree that a question like: *“Who can - with sane senses – sing a hymn like this one, or read and believe, what is written in Biblical story...?”* is a common one. At times it comes up here among our own parish members too, stemming from real concern for the present and future of our tradition... Because, what causes questions and misunderstanding or even non-understanding, has to do with the actual distance between our daily usual logic of thinking, and the message searching for words and images in the Gospel. A message that is not concerned about practical use, profitability, and mind-

techniques, but which is concerned about “being”, about “meaning” and about a path to walk one’s life.

Those who look for an explanation of the Easter message along the lines of our daily logic will literally fall silent, speechless. The women at the empty tomb, ... they fall silent, so silent, they *“fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them...”*

A quite understandable reaction in fact, even for these women, who must have been quite used to the strange images of faith in Israel! They definitely must have known the old stories which had been told in Israel for centuries: Stories about life being saved, mysteriously about new and renewed life in the face of a **sea of chaos**, which, - unexplainably, unexpectedly and unbelievably swallows a whole culture of slavery, and drowns it together with its power and weaponry..

Yes, it is UNBELIEVABLE, that vision of faith that life experienced as slavery could be over for good, and that freedom and liberation should be the destiny of humankind...

It is UNBELIEVABLE and consequently it is not easily believed... such a story. Not then and not now, ...- a story about life **past** the stories of death and senselessness... The Easter story is acceptable only to those who are willing to let this other “logic” the logic of faith enter their life...

Because faith has a logic in which words and images stretch themselves beyond their day to day significance, en start to describe what makes “**living life**” more than “**sheer survival**”: In the logic of faith, life is a challenge, a calling, with a direction and a promise, and with ONE who calls!

In the light of faith-logic, the words of the Easter story DO what they SAY and sing: And in the light of that logic even the events of our daily life are lit from within and have a different sense of meaning.

- Easterlight... on the surface of liturgy it is physically not much more than a new candle having been brought into our

church, and perhaps some fresh April wind in the morning and a stroll along the canals on a Sunday afternoon following a short, too short night...

What makes it “Easterlight” is what we do with it, with the promises we hear and with the questions these promises put to our own life-path and to our very often strong belief in death...

The central question of faith is: Are we willing to accept this strange promise, that there is something to life which transcends death? Are we willing to get close to our deepest fears, our darkneses, as Jesus did, when he descended to the realm of death...and are we willing to from there rise with Jesus to meet the unexpected morning as newborn people, inspired by the light of Easter, which - in the light of utility-logic is not much more than just another somehow oversized candle and some melodies in a church service...

Easter is NOT and cannot be about explanation, about clear factual structures of life!

It is about daring and doing!

If we dare believe- that life is more than spending time waiting for death,- that we will not be alone in our deepest darkneses, then, - and this is the real Easter mystery -, then the small things of life become important, and they reveal the ongoing process of salvation which has been unfolding since time began: Salvation unfolding, new life to begin - in the moments when we share food and life around the table of the Lord, and when we share it with each other and with others, in our diaconal activities...

New life has begun! Death and deadly structures have lost their threatening power, unexpectedly and undeservedly, - where people find comfort in our being close to them, - where we carry together the normal human fear of death ... together with those who die.

Explaining the Easter mystery? It's impossible!

Experiencing the Easter mystery?

It starts - where we let others in, into our lives,- where we stop believing in death and all death-structures of society, which keep people in any of the many slaveries of this world...

Easter-mystery: it is leading one's life centered in love that is not holding back and is willing to sacrifice, to totally invest itself for others... Love that transcends time and all physical restrictions and unites us with Him, who was and is and will ever be - source and future of our life, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

AMEN