

Matthew 28:1-10
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“Easter”

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Easter is about God getting God’s way with the world, it’s about God having the last word and that word is hope, not despair; that word is life, not death. As Christians, we are baptized into a “living hope.” So I thought we would have a little fun this morning.

Some of you are familiar with the song, “The Devil Went Down to Georgia.” By The Charlie Daniels Band, or as their fans call them, CDB.

The lyrics of the song are a conversation that happens in Georgia, between the Devil and a boy named Johnny. Both characters are fiddle players and the Devil, who has fallen behind in getting his quota of souls to fill up the fiery furnace, challenges Johnny to a fiddle competition saying, “I’ll bet a fiddle of gold, against your soul, to think I’m better than you.” And, Johnny, takes the challenge.

Each plays their best fiddle trying to win the competition, back and forth they go each trying to outdo the other. By the end of the song it is clear the Devil lost, even after bringing in his band of demons -- Johnny always had another move, another melody, a more intricate rhythm to play, a higher level of musicianship he could go to.

The Song ends, “The Devil bowed his head because he knew that he’d been beat. And he laid that golden fiddle on the ground at Johnny’s feet. And the song fades away with Johnny playing his fiddle in victory.

Easter reminds us that God always has another level to go to, another melody more inspiring than before... no matter what trouble we find ourselves in, God always has another move.

That was the case when a man named Moses convinced a nation of oppressed slaves to run away from the most powerful ruler on earth. Standing on the shore, with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh’s army closing in behind them. The people cried with despair to Moses, “What were you thinking?” Moses prays to God, “God, what were you thinking, but then Moses begins to understand, as the waters part for his people to pass through, ...

God had another move.

And then there was the Good News of a teenager named David who went out into the battlefield. He heard about a giant named Goliath who was intimidating God’s people. David spoke out against him and before he knew it, he was face-to-face with the giant. David tried to put on Saul’s armor, but Saul is a 52-tall and David is a 36-short, nothing fit! He could not even handle a grown-up sword. Goliath and his Philistine cronies are shouting, “victory!” but David knew something they didn’t know...

God had another melody to play.

Then there was a man named Daniel, who was thrown into the lion's den because he refused to stop from praying to the true and living God. The lions were hungry and Daniel was defenseless. Emperor Darius cried: "Victory!" It looked like the end. But when Darius checked to see how quickly the lions devoured Daniel, he discovered his lions had a case of lock jaw...and Daniel was fine.

God had another song to sing.

There was a young girl named Mary, an angel visited her and said she would give birth to the Messiah. She was scared, she felt inadequate, she pondered "why me? I am no one special." Until she began to understand.

God was not finished yet.

And on Good Friday, they tried Jesus, they judged him. They whipped and beat him; they mocked and scorned him; they hung him on a cross to die the death of those condemned as traitor and treasonist. They laid him in a cave and covered the tomb with a stone so large it took many men to roll it across the opening. And almost everybody, except a couple women, said: It's over. It's done. It's time to go home! The Devil has won!

But they were wrong.

On Easter morning, the women went to the tomb. The earth quaked, an angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone and sat on it, in defiance of all earthly powers. The guards froze with fear as the angel announced to the women, "Do not be afraid... he is not here... Come and see the place where Jesus lay, then go quickly and tell the others, 'Jesus has been raised from the dead.'"

Like Johnny, in that fiddle competition down in Georgie, Jesus would not let evil win. He would not let sin win. He would not let corruption, nor suffering, nor humankind's inhumanity to one another, win.

The rhythm of life had not quit beating.

This Easter Day and each time we gather to worship thought out the year, we are promised God has another move, another melody, another drumbeat that will just keep beating no matter how hard the world tries to extinguish it. No matter how trapped, how defeated, how frightened, God opens the tombs which hold us back and frees us that we may claim our place as God's children, and truly love each other, and tenderly care for the world around us.

And when God makes that move, love wins; hope wins; compassion rules; light overcomes darkness; courage overcomes fear; faith overcomes despair. When God makes that move,

Resurrection happens, Easter... happens! Not only 2000 years ago, but even in this very moment.

And you and I become born anew into a living hope.

Amen