



# Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 2018

Dear Saints of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

This week I was honored to preach at the funeral of a 37 year old pastor who died too young and left behind a wife and a two year old daughter. It was an honor, but also just plain hard work. Not just for me, but everyone who sat in the overflowing sanctuary. But what would have been inestimably harder would have been doing that work without Easter...doing that work without Jesus. But I was able to stand in that pulpit and proclaim as clearly, and with as much certainty as I could muster, that death does not have the final say. I said these words: "Jesus died, and Jesus rose again, for a day just like this." Yes he did.

I often tell pastors, deacons and Synodically Authorized Ministers: "There are three high holy days in the year - Christmas, Easter and Mothers' Day. And don't ever forget Mother's day!" All three of these days celebrate the gift of new life. Each, in its own way, celebrates Jesus bringing new life into a world that can be dragged down by the fear and the reality of death.

So, what about Easter? First of all, I hope that everyone who reads these words takes/makes the time to go to church on Easter. Secondly, as you sit there in the lily scented church, surrounded by light and the sound of beautiful hymns, try to imagine your most difficult collision with death without the belief that Jesus really did rise from that tomb. Imagine burying a parent, or a child, or a spouse or a friend without that promise. Imagine. I cannot.

I cannot imagine, because I don't remember a day in my entire life when I didn't have that promise folded into me. It has strengthened me on days when it was all I had. The promise that "Jesus died, and Jesus rose again, for a day just like this." It is an awesome gift and one for which I am grateful.

This Easter, go to church. But don't just go there. Imagine someone who hasn't received the gift of that promise. If you can't think of anyone, well, you may need to get out and make some new friends! Because what you have been given, is too precious to hang onto by yourself. All of us, if we live long enough, will experience a "day just like this." It is inevitable. And we have a promise that will make a difference to someone who just cannot do that plain hard work by themselves.

They need Jesus. They need the promise of Jesus. They need the hope of Jesus. They need what you have been given. Please...share it. It is an honor.

Bishop Rick Hoyme  
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin-ELCA

