

**Easter II - Sermon**  
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"I've got good news and I've got bad news," goes the popular saying, "Which do you want first?" In the Old Testament reading today (which we usually associate with St. John the Baptist and the season of Advent), we hear very clear instructions on that. God tells His prophet to give the bad news first, to talk about death and destruction, about sin and disobedience, about the certainty that, left to ourselves, we would be doomed. That is harsh and unpleasant. No one likes to hear it, but, if we're really in that much trouble, and we just don't know it, how are we going to look for help?

This is Eastertide, a time of shouting and celebration, a time of rescue and redemption. He has risen from the dead! He's alive and death is defeated! We are saved! People like to hear that much. "I'm OK, You're OK" was the title of a popular self-help book. Pulpits everywhere ring out with assurances of God's love, of gentle Jesus, meek and mild, who wouldn't ever condemn anyone. We just plain hate to be told that we are in trouble, and that it's our own fault, and that God is not pleased.

Well, the good news is true. God IS love, and He does want to save us, but, you know, Easter did not come until the Cross, in all its horror, had been seen. We are not saved until we recognize the horror of the sin and rebellion in our own lives, until we admit that we need help, until, like a drowning man; we actually reach out for the life preserver. If we don't know the bad news, we won't experience the good news. "...surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. "

And that is bad news if we are determined to have our own way, for God doesn't change His mind. What He has declared righteous is righteous, and what he has called evil is evil; but it is good news if we will

accept what He offers us, if we will admit our sin, ask forgiveness, seek a change in our lives, and accept the gift of salvation - in His Word, in His Sacraments, in His silent presence within.

What His word condemns is condemned, but whoever His word accepts is accepted.

The disciples had seen the horrors of His death. In so doing they had seen the horrors inside themselves. Their sorrow and hopelessness could not have been greater. That was the bad news, and it was true. But there He was, in their midst. Everything was changed! The Good News had come: He was alive! They were saved!

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

He made them wait, until the Holy Ghost came upon them, but He has come upon the Church. That's us. We have bad news and we have good news, and the world needs to hear. What's keeping us?

Let us pray. O God, who willest that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth: send forth, we beseech thee, labourers into thy harvest, and enable them to speak the word with boldness; that thy word may run and be glorified, and that all nations may know thee, the one true God, and him whom thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.