

Sermon Starter – We Have Waited for This

Isaiah 25:6-9, John 20:1-18

The problem: The story of Easter should be jolting. We have been around long enough to understand the laws of nature. Though we cannot help but cling to life (for example, 40 percent of Medicare dollars are spent in the last month of life), in the end, we know that what has died remains dead. While many things have changed since the first century, there are still fundamental truths which we hold onto and base our lives around—they *have* to stay true. But the Easter story robs us of our understanding of how things work. The promises in Isaiah which are fulfilled in the John passage challenge our presuppositions about what it means to be human. Can we accept the freedom of the Easter story without first letting go of our need for things to happen as we expect them to?

The grace: Jesus swallowed up death forever—we no longer need to live in fear of death. And yet rather than rejoicing in death's defeat, we are constantly reverting to the fear of death. Isaiah's vision that God will wipe away the tears from all faces is a promise that God will be right there beside us through suffering and pain. Yet in our despair we convince ourselves that we are utterly alone. God will make a feast of rich food for all people, yet in our mindset of meritocracy we assume that feasts are for the rich or the deserving. God has erased the distinction between insiders and outsiders, yet we continue to think, and act, tribally. God has offered us the unthinkable, the unimaginable—so much so that we may be tempted to doubt that it can possibly be true. Through this Easter season, can we learn to let go of our need to understand it all in order for us to truly receive the gift of salvation?

From Leader, Winter 2014-2015. ©2015 MennoMedia.