

## *“On the other side of yesterday”*

**March 23, 2008**

*Text: Isaiah 65:17-25, John 20:1-18*

### I.

Today, across our vast land, there’s an ongoing conversation about our future. A conversation about what kind of a future we want for our children and grandchildren. It’s a conversation about *what kind of a world, how big a world we want to live in.*

This is an important conversation. Because, always—beneath the surface of such conversation—there’s an ongoing struggle between the old and the new.

The old isn’t all bad, of course. It’s had its time; it’s had its day. The problem is ... at times, it fights against its ripening moment to give way to the new. As in most things in life, there comes a time when we have to move on, to **the other side of yesterday.**

We have to move on to a new way of embracing the global community ... to a new way of understanding the many social issues that are potentially divisive.

### II.

This past week, we observed the *fifth anniversary* of the ill-conceived war in Iraq, a war that continues to tear at our soul, as it brings untold hardship to the people of Iraq as well. Still, with no apparent end in sight, we’re trying to find our way to a conclusion we can live with as a nation.

All the while, the drumbeat of election 2008 continues to draw us in here at home ... with the uniqueness of the respective candidates, along with one stream of nuance and complexity after another *filling the daily headlines* and giving the national media fodder for endless analysis and conversation.

And all this with the flooding that has been unleashed in parts of the lower Midwest in recent days and what appears to be a protracted recession on the economic front.

And so, with gas prices continuing their rise, unabated, and the widespread mortgage crisis unraveling the stability of our financial markets, we wake each day to a world laden with confusion and one new *fear and anxiety* after another.

But then, something happens ... somewhere. A new idea is announced. A kind word is uttered. An act of generosity and compassion is offered. We look up and see our family and friends moving on with their lives. And soon, as the day wears on, hope and promise once again fill the noontime air.

And to top it all off, today is Easter, on the other side of all our yesterdays. And so, again, the question: *what kind of a world—how big a world do we dare to believe in?*

### III.

Friends, again, these are deeply challenging times in America.

1. Times when, to be sure, we want to move beyond the Iraq war ...
2. times when we want to move beyond any possible racial, ethnic or whatever other divide that might hold us back ...
3. times when we look forward to the economy getting back on track ...
4. times when, with all the craziness, we're concerned about our families, our children and their futures ...
5. we're concerned about health care and education and the environment and a whole list of things ...

There are times, therefore, when we need so very much to come together, **on the other side of yesterday.**

- Times when we need to believe again in the best of our ideals ... in the best of our common faith.
- times when we need to put the cynicism and darkness of yesterday behind us ... and determine to embrace the future with promise and hope.

If we tell the truth about ourselves, there are times in our lives when—straight away—we can't wait to turn the page.

For the disciples of Jesus, certainly the horror of Good Friday was like that. How could it not have been? All their hopes and dreams in the person of Jesus ... all their aspirations, the meaning of their lives—which every day seemed to grow deeper and larger—violently nailed on a cross to suffer and die.

And then the darkness ... and the awful pain and gripping sorrow. The one moment of *nothing* and *emptiness* after another.

But then, **On the other side of yesterday**, Easter came. And their hopes were given new life and fresh breath.

**On the other side of yesterday.** On the other side of old news ... the old order ... the old paradigm ... the old politics. On the other side of *the old me* ... my old self ... the way I used to be but am not any more.

On the other side of my failures ... rejections ... losses and defeats ... periods of time when I was not at my best ...

#### IV.

Friends, for those of us who dare to believe, to hold fast to faith; for those of us who dare to look for the best in one another ... to find *common ground* in our effort to find the *common good*, **on the other side of yesterday** is a world of endless blue sky. It's a world where hope and promise never run out.

The claim that Easter makes to all the world is that we don't have to let yesterday tell us who we are. We don't have to let yesterday define who we are for the rest of our lives. Straight and clear, Easter tells us *we can live again*; indeed, we WILL live again.

1. On the other side of the death of a cherished loved one (many of us here today have lost loved ones in recent times), we never knew it could be so painful.
2. On the other side of the break-up of a relationship, of strained relationships in the work place, the loss of a job, or one health concern after another. On the other side of a bad year ...
3. We've all got stuff we want to be on the other side of; an injustice at work or in community, a sustained injury that, for so long, wouldn't heal.

**On the other side of yesterday**, friends, is where we live our lives.

#### V.

Early on Easter morning, at the prompting of Mary Magdalene, the disciples, Peter and John, were running to the tomb where Jesus had been buried a couple days before. Mary had told them that the stone had been rolled away.

Certainly, they were excited; but they must have also been confused and apprehensive. With cautious joy mixed with a very real fear, they ran on ... and no doubt images and memories flashed through their minds. Images of death and betrayal ...

Approaching and entering the tomb, how could they possibly know what to make of it all?

Where was Jesus?

All they knew for sure was that, with all they'd been through, there had to be something better.

- Desperately, they needed some sign, some tangible reassurance.
- They needed to know that their hopes and dreams of the moment—having seen the tomb empty and having remembered Jesus' words to them earlier about *rising* after three days—they needed to know that it all fit into a larger vision of the future.

Like us, everyday, they needed hope and reassurance about tomorrow, **on the other side of yesterday.**

## VI.

There's the powerful story about a school teacher who had been asked to visit a child in a large hospital who had been badly burned.

Taking down the child's name and room number at the hospital, the teacher was told only: ***We're studying nouns and adverbs. I'd be grateful if you could help him with his homework so he doesn't fall too far behind the others.***

However, later that day, arriving at the hospital, the teacher wasn't prepared to find the boy so horribly burned and in such obvious pain.

Nonetheless, although overcome with compassion, and taken aback by it all more than a little, she plunged forward. Walking into the boy's hospital room, she boldly announced,

*I'm the hospital teacher. Your teacher sent me to help you with nouns and adverbs.*

With the boy in so much pain and hardly able to respond, the teacher felt a little ashamed to be putting the child through such a seemingly senseless exercise.

However, the next morning a nurse asked the teacher, ***what did you do to that boy? Ever since you were here yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. Suddenly, he's fighting back; he's responding to treatment. It's as if he's decided to live.***

Some time later, after he had recovered, the boy explained his experience ... how he had given up hope until the teacher arrived. With joyful tears, he noted: **they wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a boy who was dying.**

Wow! **The other side of yesterday.**

## VII.

What Easter declares, friends, everyday, is that the God of infinite love and mercy, the God of saving grace, is on the move. Moving us beyond the old ... the old ways of doing things ... the old, worn-out ways of seeing the world ... moving us into the brightness of tomorrow.

Listen to these words of Easter hope from the prophet known as **Third Isaiah** ... during the historical period known as the *restoration*, when Israel, after decades in Babylonian exile, had returned to her homeland. Coming back to Judah and to Jerusalem, before her lay the enormous task of rebuilding the city and, later, the temple as well.

These were tough times ... times of difficult and painful adjustment.

CHECK IT OUT ... from **Isaiah 65** ...

*For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind ...*

***Be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating ... for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight ... I will rejoice in Jerusalem ... and delight in my people ...***

In other words, ***O what a day*** ... a day when *the wolf and the lamb will feed together, the lion shall eat straw with the ox* ... Who ever heard of that? Of the utterly improbable? A wolf and a lamb feeding together; a lion and an ox sharing their feed.

*And they shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain,* says the Lord.

**On the other side of yesterday** ... When God comes and reminds us again of our highest ideals ... of a love that will not let us go ... a love that pushes us upward—upward and upward—into the high hopes of tomorrow.

The stone is rolled away ... Jesus is not there. He is risen. **He is risen indeed.**

**All praise be unto God! Amen!**

Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz  
Miami Lakes Congregational Church, *United Church of Christ*  
6701 Miami Lakeway South  
Miami Lakes, FL 33014  
On the web at [www.mlchurch.com](http://www.mlchurch.com)

