

“Could We Start Again, Please?”
Acts 10:34-43; Luke 24:1-12

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As you can imagine, I’ve been thinking about Easter lately; Easters past, good Easters, better Easters. I’ve been thinking about Easter movies. I’ve narrowed down my favorite Jesus/Easter movies to just five. ‘The Last Temptation of Christ’ is a classic. ‘Jesus of Montreal’ is excellent. Of course, we have to mention ‘The Life of Brian’. Inspired. “Blessed are the cheesemakers” is one of those lines we’ll repeat forever.

We certainly have to include ‘Godspell’. “Day by day....”
What’s not to like?

To my mind, though, the best is still the musical ‘Jesus Christ, Superstar’ by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Weber. I don’t mean the 2018 made-for-TV version with John Legend and Alice Cooper. (Alice Cooper? I didn’t know he was still alive!) I mean the 1973 version with the long hair and tie-dyed t-shirts and the magic bus in the desert. Great, great movie.

One song in particular keeps coming back to me. ‘Could we start again, please?’ Jesus has been arrested and Mary Magdalene and Peter sing about all they’ve gone through and how everything has fallen apart, and could we start again, please? ‘Before it gets too frightening, we ought to call a halt. Oh, could we start again, please.’ Marvelous, haunting song.

Do you know that feeling? Have you felt that way? Wanted to stop and start again? Could we start again, please?

I wonder if that’s how the women at the tomb felt. Remember, these are the women who watched Jesus die on Friday afternoon. On Saturday they stayed home, observing the sabbath. But now, at

first light on Sunday morning, they've come to the tomb with their oils to prepare his body properly. Do you think they felt that way? Is it too late? Could we possibly, possibly start again, please?

They enter the tomb and see Jesus' body is not there. Suddenly, there are two men whose clothes are gleaming like lightning. That means they're some kind of angelic, divine beings. Remember, this is the ancient world. They can't go to Wal-Mart and buy a gallon of bleach. If your clothes are as white as lightning it means you're some sort of divine being.

The men tell the women Jesus is not there. He is risen. He is risen! He is not here because he is no longer dead. He is risen!

And that's it. That's the answer to the question. That's the answer to the question the women have. The question you and I have. Can we start again? Yes. Yes, we can!

We can start again because Jesus started again. We are not stuck because Jesus was not stuck. Death could not keep Jesus from becoming alive again and starting again. And because Jesus started again, we know we can, too. Right here. Right now. In this life we are living today, we can start again. Jesus started again and as Jesus' brothers and sisters we can start again, too. Right here. Right now.

We don't have to be the people our parents tell us to be. We can be different. We can start again.

We don't have to stay stuck in our dead-end, soul-sucking jobs. We can try something new. We can start again.

We don't have to let our relationships sink deeper and deeper until they disappear into a black hole of despair. We can have life-giving, love-affirming relationships. We can start again.

We don't have to absorb everything mean and hurtful our culture has taught us about sexual orientation and lifestyle. We

can feel good about ourselves and celebrate who we are. We can start again. We can start again. We can start again.

Even better, starting again has no limits and no expiration date. We can start again, and again, and again.

Just recently my wife told me about something she had heard on the radio. The music of the 1980s is popular again. I like that. I was in my 20s in the 1980s so that was the music I bonded with and the music I still enjoy today.

The 1980s were important, not just for good taste, but it's also the time when women really broke the glass ceiling as pop and rock stars. There were some great female bands: the Go-Gos, Banana-Rama, the Bangles.

There were also a lot of excellent women solo acts and lead singers: Pat Benatar, Joan Jett, Debbie Harry. Of course, who can forget Madonna?

My personal favorite is Cyndi Lauper. Her songs are fun. They have a light, joyous element to them, even when she's singing about difficult subjects.

One song I keep coming back to is Time-after-Time. It has a wonderful refrain:

*If you're lost, you can look and you will find me
Time-after-time
If you fall, I will catch you, I will be waiting
Time-after-time.*

Understand, I have no idea of Cyndi Lauper's personal life. I have no clue what kind of person she is. But I do know this is the message of Easter. This is what Easter is all about.

We can start again, time-after-time. There is no limit to God's love. If we are lost, Jesus is there, time-after-time. If we fall, Jesus will catch us, time-after-time. When we are lost, when we are

shaken, when we are isolated and alone, when our relationships are in ruins, our self-esteem is in tatters and our life is one big dumpster fire, we can start again. Not just once, but time-after-time.

Friends, this is good news. It would be wrong to keep it to ourselves. We have to share it. No, we haven't been to a tomb or seen any men in blindingly white clothes, but we know how much God loves us. We know, we know we can start again.

Like the women, let's freely relate to one and all what we have experienced. God's message is for all of us. Jesus, who was baptized by John the Baptist, preached the good news of God's love. By God's power he healed people and fed people and brought joy to their lives. And when he would not stop talking about how much God loves us, he was put to death by crucifixion.

But he was raised up to start life again. And because of this we know by the power of God's love we can, too.

Some people won't listen. They'll think it's just idle talk. But others will want to look and learn the truth for themselves: because of Jesus we can start again, time-after-time.

My friends, Easter is not a movie. Easter is not a song. Easter is how much God loves us and how we can start again, time-after-time. This is how much God loves us, thanks be to God. Amen!