

Easter Day
Reformation, Media
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There are moments that you remember forever – births, weddings – sure, But other moments that catch you by surprise but once experienced never leave your memory.

Like the day Nan Fox, the matriarch of the congregation I served up in Newtown, invited Laura and me to come over for “something to eat – nothing fancy.” Nothing fancy for Nan beef rouladen – pounded thin and rolled with a wonderful mixture of carrots and onion and mushroom and served with a homemade bordelaise sauce, some sublime au gratin potatoes, and a couple of vegetables fresh from the garden – and the final touch was homemade ice cream cake roll with chocolate sauce. Obviously I still remember the meal.

Or there is the day I was playing golf at Springfield Country Club and we came to the short par 5 that doglegs to the left – someone’s cyclone fenced back yard defining the left corner of the dogleg. I hit my drive about as far as I can hit it and decided to try to go for the green in two – I crushed my fairway wood, hitting it long enough, but off the green in the rough. The others in our foursome got on nicely in three, and I went to my ball, about 5-8 yards off the green, chipped it up – it landed softly and rolled into the hole! The only eagle I have had – so far. I still remember that shot – Oh – and Bruce, that was a nice birdie you had too.

Then there was the day at Poe Paddy State Park on Penn's Creek in late May. We had fished late the night before because the Green Drake was hatching. It's one of the great and mythical mayflies that trout love – and Penn's Creek is the mother lode for fishing the Shad fly (as local's call it). But this was the next morning – early – the sun just creeping over the mountain and the mist rising off the cool water as the stream rolled lazily through the deep pool in front of me. Occasionally a Green Drake spinner would float past and I just sat in the quiet, enjoying the moment – when out of the corner of my eye I glimpse a rise – the distinct circles of water made by a trout rising to take a fly, and with it a “klumpp” the deep sound that every trout fisherman knows of a large trout rolling over after taking that fly.

I quietly slipped into the water, carefully approaching from downstream so it would not see or hear me. Stealthily I made my way to a position for the cast, watching – and seeing the fish lazily come up a couple of more times for the spinner. I tied on my best Green Drake imitation, stripped off some line and with my breathing a bit more shallow, made a couple of false casts to calculate the distance and then let the line go – it uncurled and projected the fly out toward the bank of the stream, landing softly about five feet above my quarry, tight against the bank. It gently floated toward the edge of the rock where the trout was lurking and as it slipped around the rock – BAM – the fish took the fly and I bent the rod to set the hook.

The fish took off down stream and line creamed off my reel I could feel the weight of it and knew it was a great fish. Then it came charging back up and I reeled in furiously.

The fish seemed firmly hooked and I was breathing hard now, anxious to land it. Then it dove down deep into the pool and I could see the submerged log it was trying to reach. I bent the rod to try to turn it, but it pulled the line and I could see this veteran of battle rubbing its snout on that log – and POP just like that my fly came out – the fish had won. But I still had the wonder and thrill of the moment that I would never forget.

Moments of life that stay in your mind forever – have you had moments like that? For the women, it was Easter. The sun was just squeezing over the horizon, adding a dull red glow to the darkened sky as it prepared to break the day with its bright shining rays. The women walked slowly, deliberately toward the grave, silent, each with their own thoughts, occasionally talking in quiet tones – “Do you have enough spices and oil?” “Who will roll away the stone?” How could this have happened?

Then, as they approached the tomb, two memories were seared into their minds. A bright light – dazzling them in its brightness. The sun’s rays, suddenly bursting out? No, more than that – a radiant presence emanating out from a person – a figure – an ethereal being – a light that was unlike anything they had ever seen, nearly blinding them and blurring the memory of their second sight – the stone had been rolled away.

Then the voice – it seemed to be all around them – or perhaps from the angel – or was it from within – it was as strange as the light, but distinct, clear – memorable – “You seek Jesus of Nazareth – He is not here – He is risen.”

As inadequate as my description of Nan's meal or the eagle chip shot or the morning at Penn's Creek, So our Easter gospels cannot adequately capture the awesome nature of that moment or the wonder of their memory of it. It changed their lives. More than the birth of child – more than a marriage – more than any other moment it changed their lives and it changed all of human history. As surely as I can still taste Nan's Ice Cream Cake Roll or feel the tug of the line as that big brown rubs off my fly, The women would forever see and remember that moment. This is not just a story in the Bible. These are real people, real memories, seared in their minds.

And they shared it – first with the disciples, then with other believers and now, with us -- so that we can stand with them in wonder on this Easter Day. So that in moments of our doubts about God's power over all the forces that oppose God in this world, when we are trudging slowly, silently through the dark moments of our lives, with thoughts swirling in our heads and wondering how something like this could happen, we can remember the power of God to overcome all the forces arrayed against us.

They share this story with all people, for all time, so that as we move toward the end of our life and wonder – “What's next?” We can have this image of a dazzling light – brighter than the light of a new day, brighter than the sun – the radiant light of God's divine presence and power -- which proclaims to all who gather to remember our lives – He is not here – He is risen.

Amen.