

The Gables – Easter Benefits

Ice Breaker –

Donna: *It's springtime and flowers blooming to life. Here's a story by Hans Christian Andersen entitled, "The Loveliest Rose in the World:"*

Once there reigned a queen, in whose gardens were found the most glorious flowers at all seasons and from all the lands of the world. But more than all others she loved the roses, and she had many kinds of this flower, from the wild dog-rose with its apple-scented green leaves to the most splendid, large, crimson roses. They grew against the garden walls, wound themselves around the pillars and wind-frames, and crept through the windows into the rooms, and all along the ceilings in the halls. And the roses were of many colors, and of every fragrance and form.

But care and sorrow dwelt in those halls. The queen lay upon a sick-bed, and the doctors said she must die.

"There is still one thing that can save her," said the wise man. "Bring her the loveliest rose in the world, the rose that is the symbol of the purest, the brightest love. If that is held before her eyes ere they close, she will not die."

Then old and young came from every side with roses, the loveliest that bloomed in each garden, but they were not of the right sort. The flower was to be plucked from the Garden of Love. But what rose in all that garden expressed the highest and purest love?

And the poets sang of the loveliest rose in the world,--of the love of maid and youth, and of the love of dying heroes.

"But they have not named the right flower," said the wise man. "They have not pointed out the place where it blooms in its splendor. It is not the rose that springs from the hearts of youthful lovers, though this rose will ever be fragrant in song. It is not the bloom that sprouts from the blood flowing from the breast of the hero who dies for his country, though few deaths are sweeter than his, and no rose is redder than the blood that flows then. Nor is it the wondrous flower to which man devotes many a sleepless night and much of his fresh life, the magic flower of science." "But I know where it blooms," said a happy mother, who came with her pretty child to the bedside of the dying queen. "I know where the loveliest rose of love may be found. It springs in the blooming cheeks of my sweet child, when, waking from sleep, it opens its eyes and smiles tenderly at me." "Lovely is this rose, but there is a lovelier still," said the wise man. "I have seen the loveliest, purest rose that blooms," said a woman. "I saw it on the cheeks of the queen. She had taken off her golden crown. And in the long, dreary night she carried her sick child in her arms. She wept, kissed it, and prayed for her child." "Holy and wonderful is the white rose of a mother's grief," answered the wise man, "but it is not the one we seek." "The loveliest rose in the world I saw at the altar of the Lord," said the good Bishop, "The young maidens went to the Lord's Table. Roses were blushing and pale roses shining on their fresh cheeks. A young girl stood there. She looked with all the love and purity of her spirit up to heaven. That was the expression of

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the highest and purest love." "May she be blessed," said the wise man, "but not one of you has yet named the loveliest rose in the world." Then there came into the room a child, the queen's little son. "Mother," cried the boy, "only hear what I have read." And the child sat by the bedside and read from the Book of Him who suffered death upon the cross to save men, and even those who were not yet born. "Greater love there is not." And a rosy glow spread over the cheeks of the queen, and her eyes gleamed, for she saw that from the leaves of the Book there bloomed the loveliest rose, that sprang from the blood of Christ shed on the cross. "I see it!" she said, "He who beholds this, the loveliest rose on earth, shall never die."

Source: <http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/easter-religious/short-stories/the-loveliest-rose-in-the-world.html>

Dialog –

Rick: Please read the following Bible verses as I call them out:

- Psalm 103:14-16
- Isaiah 40:6-8
- Job 14:1-2
- James 1:9-11

Donna: The Bible teaches that we are all like flowers, which will one day fade away and die. Please read the following verse:

- 1 Peter 1:23-25.

Rick: Although we will die physically, like the perishable seed of the ground, we will live forever if we take hold of the imperishable seed of God. If we have faith in Jesus Christ – that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins that Good Friday over two-thousand years ago – we will live with God forever. After Jesus died for us, God raised Him from the dead that Easter Sunday. What are the benefits of Easter to us if we become a Christian?

(1) We are saved from the penalty of our sins:

- ❖ Romans 3:23
- ❖ Romans 6:23
- ❖ Ephesians 2:8-9

(2) We can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit:

- ❖ John 20:21-22
- ❖ Acts 1:8

(3) We can be in a relationship with God:

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- ❖ Revelation 3:20
- (4) We can have an abundant life:
 - ❖ John 10:10
- (5) He has a plan for our life that can be exciting to follow:
 - ❖ Jeremiah 29:11
- (6) We can experience God's love for us:
 - ❖ 2 Thessalonians 3:5
 - ❖ 1 John 4:6-8
- (7) We don't have to fear death any longer:
 - ❖ Hebrews 2:14-15

Donna: We're all flowers in God's garden. Like a flower, we're all going to die physically one day (unless Jesus returns before then). The question is, will we remain perishable seed, dead in our sins and *separated* from God forever, or will we become imperishable seed through faith in Jesus Christ and *live with* God forever. The choice is yours.

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Scripture verses:

Psalm 103:14-16 - for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

Isaiah 40:6-8 - A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?” “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

Job 14:1-2 - “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.

James 1:9-11 - The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

1 Peter 1:23-25 - For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

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Romans 3:23 – ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

John 20:21-22 - Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit...”

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

John 10:10 - The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. (ASV)

Hebrews 2:14-15 - Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 - May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.

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1 John 4:5-8 - Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.