

“The First Laptop”

Mark 16:1-8

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Easter

The first ones hit the store shelves on July 12, 1960. Arthur Granjean, a French auto mechanic, invented this toy while tinkering in his garage. When the Ohio Art Company saw a drawing of Mr. Granjean’s “magic screen” in 1959, they had very little interest in it. Upon a second look, the Art Company decided to gamble and paid Mr. Granjean \$25,000 for his idea. It became an instant success and the factory could not make enough of them to fill Christmas orders that year.

Looking back, manufacturers are now calling Etch A Sketch the first laptop. It is still a very popular toy and has changed little down through the years. The print on the bright red frame has changed slightly, but the inner workings of a stylus, thin wires, aluminum powder and plastic beads have remained the same. The screen on which images can be displayed is still nine and one-half inches wide.

What has made this toy popular for almost fifty years? Etch A Sketch makes it possible for budding artists to quickly and cleanly start over if they make a mistake or want to dream again. You merely shake the frame and a clean slate appears, ready for the next idea to take shape.

We like to be able to start over, don’t we? We know we are prone to making mistakes, sometimes big ones, and we don’t relish the idea of being held hostage by them. Is it possible to begin again? Yes it is and this is the message of Easter.

Easter is about starting over. It is about beginning again when you thought all hope was gone. It is about second chances and new opportunities.

This was brought to my attention this week in my study of Mark’s account of the resurrection. As the startled women entered the empty tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He is not here! See the place where they laid him. **Go tell the disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you’**” Mark 16:6-7.

Why Galilee? Why were the disciples specifically instructed to return to the northern region of Galilee to meet Jesus? Galilee was the place where their ministry began. It was around the Sea of Galilee that Jesus called the first disciples and would call them a second time to the work of building the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. It was time to go back to Galilee, the place where it all began, and begin again. It was time to start over.

Can you imagine how happy and humbled the disciples felt? The one they denied, deserted and disappointed wanted to see them, not so he could condemn them, but issue a second invitation to follow him.

This meant that Jesus would not select a new group of disciples to replace them, leaving them on their own to deal with their guilt and shame. Instead, he would include them in his plans for the future, resurrecting their self-esteem and shattered dreams to make this possible.

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Jesus asked Peter three times while on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. When Peter answered with a resounding yes all three times, Jesus replied, “Feed my sheep.”

It is what was not said around that early morning campfire that speaks volumes. I hear neither strong condemnation nor questions that would leave Peter speechless. Jesus wasn't into making Peter feel worse or inadequate. He was, however, into restoring Peter's self-esteem and usefulness through forgiving and empowering love. This is what he wants to do for us, too.

Easter is about starting over when you thought all hope was gone. It is about confronting guilt and shame with the good news of forgiveness and reconstruction. It is about healing wounds and restoring relationships. It is about learning from mistakes and becoming wiser. It is about learning what is important and rearranging values and priorities. It is about admitting weaknesses and turning them into strengths. It is about dreaming new dreams so you can write more chapters to your story. It is about daybreak when you thought the night would never end. Easter is about starting over and who among us does not need to experience this?

Surely you realize that Easter is not confined to a day or a season. It is not only about life after death, as important and comforting as this is. It is a miracle that can occur in our lives any day we are willing to meet Jesus and respond to his call to follow him. This may be that day for you.

Perhaps you, like the disciples, are reeling from bad decisions that have left you wallowing in guilt and shame. You have disappointed a mate, children, parents, teachers or fellow church members. You need to be forgiven and your self-esteem needs to be resurrected. Wounds need to be healed and relationships repaired. You need new dreams that can inspire you to achieve your potential.

You need to be embraced by fellow strugglers that will encourage and pray for you. You need to be included in a work that will enable you to reach out to those that have fallen in a grave of despondency and despair so you can lift them to new heights. You need to feel the presence of Christ giving you new life and you need to be the presence of Christ offering hope and help to those around you.

If so, you need to hear and experience the Easter message. Easter is about starting over and beginning again. It is about hope and help. It is about new life on earth and in heaven.

“Don't be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He is not here! See the place where they laid him. Go tell the disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.’”

He's here now. This is our Galilee. Let's talk to him.