“Well I’ve got good news… and bad news.”

Many of us hear and use these words in our day to day life. It’s a phrase most commonly used when one is faced with both a bright side…and a dark side. When you get that new smart phone you wanted…only to realize that your entire accumulative contacts list has now vanished and you have to spend a week trying to get them all back… or when that first beautiful spring flower bursts from your garden… along with about ten thousand weeds.

It’s also a phrase that can be ambiguous. Sometimes the good news outweighs the bad news…sometimes we’re not so fortunate. And sometimes, the two forms of news simply cancel each other out.

Some of us have a preference on which news comes first. Somebody may say, “bad news first” hoping that the good news will make up for the unpleasantness beforehand while others may respond, “good news first” wishing to postpone that bad news just a little bit longer. I, personally, am a good news first kind of guy. I like to have that shred of light to hold on to before being plunged into the abyss.

I remember in eighth grade, I was a part of the Delong orchestra and we were all super excited around this time for the big end-of-the-year trip to Valley Fair. It was the big Kahuna, the light at the end of a dark academic tunnel, so to speak. As the date drew nearer and nearer on my calendar, I began to fantasize about all the sights and sounds of the theme park, from the delicious funnel cakes to the death defying roller coasters that seemed to break the sound barrier. At the top of my list, however, was a ride called… The Wild Thing. The Wild Thing was the scariest, awesomest, fastest, and most insane ride at the theme park, and everyone always talked about it when they went.

I was extremely excited when the day came. We all checked in with our first period teachers and headed down to the bus that would sweep us away to Shakopee, Minnesota. Lunch bag in hand, I boarded the bus and waited for the attendance list to end. After we left, Mrs. Heuschele, the Delong orchestra teacher, stood up at the front, microphone in hand and asked us if we were excited. The uproar was deafening. After calming us down, my teacher proceeded to utter those deadly words… “Well, I’ve got some good news, and I’ve got some bad news.”

The bus went silent as everyone tuned in to hear what she had to say. She continued,

“We are on our way to Valley Fair and we’re getting reports that the lines are all very short!” Excited whispers began to fill the bus. My own excitement skyrocketed. She continued,

“The bad news is, the lines are short because it’s raining and Wild Thing is down for repairs.”

Sometimes, it seems that bad news overshadows the good. When we find that the gadget we really wanted only leads to more work and confusion or the end of a fight among friends means a long
period of awkwardness. Jesus’ passion and resurrection can also be viewed as a good news, bad news scenario. Many Easter sermons I’ve heard tend to focus on either the pain of Jesus’ crucifixion or the joy of his resurrection separately. The good news separate from the bad news. But, today, I see a good news, bad news scenario that that goes hand in hand. The bad news inextricably bound to the good news, but, at the same time, totally outshone by it.

Anyone who’s seen Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ would agree that the pain Jesus underwent was beyond modern comprehension: full condemnation from his peers, the weight of a heavy cross, the tears of a lamenting mother; all these factors contributing to His death…for us. It would be a stretch to call His suffering and burial good news, but it is an undeniable part of the good news that followed on the first Easter Sunday in history.

No doubt, when the three women hiked down to the tomb early Easter morning, they were still in a bad news first mindset. With the cross still fresh in their minds, none seemed all too sure that any good news could spring from such a painful ordeal. Nonetheless, the three woman were blown away to find an empty tomb with an angel declaring Jesus had risen from the dead! This news was so great and so good that the three women themselves were shocked “for terror and amazement had seized them.” This news was so great and so good that even Thomas, one of Jesus’ own disciples doubted it for a moment. This news was so great and so good, that it’s the reason we celebrate Easter Sunday two thousand years later. Now, instead of a story of great sadness and despair, we see a story of joy and redemption; a story in which the good news conquers bad news.

How important is this good news? Look around you. I see a lot of colorful clothing in celebration of this spring time holiday. Why is it that we wear such vivid and lively colors to Easter service? As a begrudging toddler, I used to think it was the only way anyone could ever stay awake this early in the morning! I now understand that it is because these colors represent life. Eternal life. We dress in bright colors rather than black funeral shrouds to celebrate the good news, because, in the end, that’s all there is. God saves the best news for last. Yes, Jesus was betrayed. Yes, he laid down his life for those he loved. Yes, He died on the cross. But look at where we are today. Because of Him, we are all forgiven and saved from all sin.

The Easter story is one of good news and bad news, of pain and redemption, but I believe it is the good that holds far more importance. Everywhere in the Bible, there is talk of the importance of Good News. When I typed in “Good News” on my iPod’s Bible app… I’m not kidding… I got 44 relevant verses from the books of: Samuel, 1st Kings, 2nd Kings, Proverbs, Isaiah, Nahum, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, Thessalonians, and Hebrews. Mark even introduces his gospel with the words “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah.” As a congregation, our mission is “to serve in Christ’s love and share the Good News.”

For the sake of antithesis, I also looked up “Bad News.” Only three verses showed up. So let’s not wallow in the bad news of Jesus’ crucifixion. Let’s instead rejoice in the Good News: the victory over death He has won.