



Easter Sunday

April 12, 2020

Introduction

This is the day the Lord has made! Christ is risen, and through him all creation is made new! Christ's resurrection truly brings life to everyone. With the women at the tomb, we are astonished, elated, and grateful. We proclaim the good news of God's endless love.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

You may want to have a small bowl of water available to remind you of your baptism!

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are raised with him to new life.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We give you thanks, O God,

for in the beginning you created us in your image
and planted us in a well-watered garden.

In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched,
and you gave us water from the rock.

When we did not know the way,
you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters.

At the cross, you watered us from Jesus' wounded side,
and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life.

We praise you for your salvation through water,
and for all water everywhere.

Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love.

Satisfy the thirsty, and give us the life only you can give.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn of the Day

Jesus Christ is Risen Today

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:1-6

God's final word is always "Yes." Because God's love is everlasting, God always remains faithful. Ancient Israel is assured that it will be rebuilt and have plentiful crops. The people of God too will ultimately be reunited.

Read the text [here](#).

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Easter means new life for us as it first meant new life for Christ. His resurrection reshapes the entire focus and motivation for our lives since we are now hidden with the risen Christ in God.

¹If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Gospel: John 20:1-18

John's gospel describes the confusion and excitement of the first Easter: the stone is moved, disciples race back and forth, and angels speak to a weeping woman. Then, Jesus himself appears. The people of God too will ultimately be reunited.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Folks at Mt. Zion are likely to remember that a few years ago, their pastor could not lead the traditional Christmas Eve worship service. I had the flu and was under direct orders from the doctor to stay home. Yet worship went on, because the congregation gathered on schedule with great volunteer leadership. The good news was proclaimed in word and song and candles were lit to share the light of Christ. It was still Christmas, even though I was stuck at home – right across the parking lot – watching a Christmas Eve worship service from some big congregation in Charlotte on television.

I am reminded of that experience today. It is a strange time to be the church. We normally function by gathering for worship and study and fellowship. The faith community is truly a means of grace for all of us, right along with the sacraments.

Fortunately, with help from modern technology, some of us are still able to gather virtually for some of those same events, using our phones and our computers. Even those who have not gathered for events have still been checking on each other regularly by phone and helping others in need in a variety of ways. I keep saying – and need for us all to believe this – **We ARE the church even when we cannot gather AT the church!**

Vicar Natalie closed her sermon on Maundy Thursday with a quote from Facebook. In the wake of the pandemic, there is so much worry and fear swirling, that it may not be good for us to watch too much television news or read too many Facebook posts. But I found this quote from Casey Kerins (which I read on Facebook) helpful:

*“Maybe, for once, we celebrate Easter differently.
Maybe, we celebrate the Resurrection just as the disciples did:
Alone, in the silence, hoping the faith outweighs the fear.”*

Just as Christmas came that year without the pastor leading worship, it is indeed Easter today without us gathering together to sing the familiar hymns and hear the familiar gospel texts. In fact, just as this has been the “Lentiest of Lents” that most of us have ever known, this maybe the most appropriate Easter ever, as we observe it in much the same way that Jesus’ disciples did that first Easter.

In these uncertain times, rather than remain at home held captive by fear, we stay at home out of love for others. May we continue during this time to pray for hope and faith that are stronger than the fear that threatens to overwhelm us.

I feel more like Mary Magdalene today than ever before. She went to the tomb alone early on the first Easter morning, in her sorrow and her worry. There she encountered the Risen Christ who sent her with a message for the other disciples. She told them joyfully that she had seen the Lord! I am standing here today to tell you that I have seen the Lord at work among you in the world, in oh-so-many ways in the past weeks. Especially in the way that you are sheltering in place for the sake of others.

As we trust that our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead into life, we also trust in the sure and certain promise that because Jesus was raised from the dead; we, too, shall be raised from death into new life.

When we are finally able to gather again in person for worship, whatever the date on the calendar, I predict that we will celebrate the Resurrection together with great joy and with plenty of Alleluias!

So I know that we can trust in God’s promise and presence with us and say these words to each other from the safety of our own homes: Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Hymn of the Day

The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Won

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

God of resurrection, from the very beginning you give the church the gift of women as your witnesses: as preachers, teachers, and leaders. Open our ears to their proclamation this day and always. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All your creation praises you—the earth hums, the seas pulse, the stars shine, and the galaxies whirl in glorious harmonies to honor you. Let us hear and blend our voices in the song. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

The countries of the world experience disunity and conflict; we set our minds on fear and greed rather than on your rule of justice and steadfast love. Build up all countries on your cornerstone of peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We still weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. Cradle the fearful, the suffering, and the dying, assuring them of your loving presence (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant peace to those who struggle to isolate at home, and bless the courageous work of first responders, medical professionals, and all those working to providing essential services during these days. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Risen Lord, you went ahead of us into the grave and defeated the powers of evil. We remember those who have died in faith. Inspire us to live our lives in this resurrection hope and draw us to you in our final days. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn

Thine Be the Glory

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.