

April 17, 2022
Easter

Welcome and Announcements

***Call to Worship**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

***Hymn 232** Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Prayer for Easter

O Christ, in your resurrection,

The heavens and earth rejoice, Alleluia!

By your resurrection you broke open the gates of hell
and destroyed sin and death.

Keep us victorious over sin.

By your resurrection, you raised the dead,
and brought us from death to life.

Guide us in the way of eternal life.

By your resurrection you confounded your guards and executioners,
and filled your disciples with joy.

Give us joy in your service.

By your resurrection you proclaimed good news to the women and apostles,
and brought salvation to the whole world.

Direct our lives as your new creation.

God of mercy,

we no longer look for Jesus among the dead.
for he is alive and has become the Lord of life.

**From the waters of death, you raise us with him
and renew the gift of life within us.**

**Increase in our minds and hearts
the risen life we share with Christ,**

**and help us grow as your people
toward the fullness of eternal life with you,
through Christ our Lord,**

**who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. Amen.**

First Reading Luke 24:1-12

Time for Young Disciples

Gospel Reading John 20:1-18

The Morning Message

I heard the little “bing!” that announced I had a message on my phone. It was an SOS from dear friend. We met doing presbytery work and formed a fast and strong bond.

“Help! The pastor’s sick, I’m writing a sermon, the session has met and approved me to officiate Communion. But, I need a Book of Common Worship and can’t find one anywhere in the church. I’ve never been on the other side of the Communion Table and I don’t know the right words to say!”

The irony of this moment was rich. My friend is one of the most articulate people I know. She is gifted in many ways and communication is her strong suit. She has had more experience at public speaking than I’ll ever have.

I’ve taken this call before and immediately sent her a link to the on-line resource. But, when I hadn’t heard from her in about thirty minutes, I sent a text.

All was well. She just made a fast trip to the church to look for recorded service music they might use in worship. The organist had just been diagnosed with strep.

Now, I had my own issues with worship this week. When Ed got back from his service Thursday night, he was decompressing from an unfortunate incident he witnessed.

Holy Week marks the defining moments of the Christian faith. We have good news to tell. But, for awhile in recent days, it felt like the good news was getting kicked in the teeth. Now, I learned a long time ago that this happens sometimes when we enter holy moments. We encounter a negative energy that gets in the way.

So, I said as much to my friend and reminded myself as well as her that our task is a simple one. We just need to stick to Mary’s script: “I have seen the Lord!”

To say, “I have seen the Lord!” is to point out resurrection in the midst of ruin, new life when all that seems visible is death; love in the face of hate; decency and goodness when that which is vitriolic and vile and vicious finds only more and more followers.

Because, in the end, resurrection is not only the promise of life after death, which, is huge, but, it is also that the life-giving love of God will always move the stones away. Tombs are just that-containers for the dead. And there are enough tombs around us, dark dwelling places that fuel corruption and deception, racism, sexism, rejection, suspicion, fear.

Two long years ago, we celebrated Easter in our homes because a deadly virus prevented almost all social interaction. It may have felt as though you were trapped in a tomb. Thanks to the efforts of many,

many people and institutions and the public working together toward the goals of life and health and well-being, that stone is being rolled away.

But, we have been changed. Rolling the stone away may reveal places that need further work. Those of you in education are aware of the impact Covid has had on students and families. I have heard some teachers say it may take years to catch up. It's hard to see God's work in this type of situation, but, it is possible.

Sarah Bessey is a young contemporary author and preacher. She speaks with clarity, frank honesty, and with a spirit of humility. She says out loud what most of us think but can't quite say: that some days we are unwavering believers. But, sometimes we have doubts.

Bessey writes, "And Jesus is-still, now, always-the resurrection and the life. And on the days when I believe this, I am certain we will also be resurrected and death will not have the final word and all tears will be wiped away and there will be no more night, no more hunger, no more wounding, no more loss, no more good-byes.

On the days when I believe this, I believe death is a dawn and never the last word.

On the days when I believe this, I know the miracle is that God knows the dark and never the last word.

On the days when I believe this, I believe that ongoing hope of resurrection changes how we engage in our lives as they stand right now as we love and know and walk with God who brings life out of death, order out of chaos, healing out of sickness, wholeness out of brokenness.

On the days when I believe this, I know God isn't finished with this story yet.

But, there are days when I don't believe it.

And on those, I have this: God With Us, Emmanuel.

This Easter, it may be all some of us have. We can't quite get to resurrection and life yet, but, in that place of exile, we can rest alongside God with us, which is our country of grace for today."

I've shared this before. When my grandson was on spring break last year, he spent a lot of time with his dad. Of course, the whole week was chronicled by iPhone camera. We have pictures of Tad eating breakfast, playing with the dog, running in the park, and eating lumberjack-sized hamburgers at an outdoor café.

Then there was this:

Tad is singing from the backseat of the car:

"Do you know the muffin man, the muffin man, the muffin man.

Do you know the muffin man, who...

Do you know the muffin man, who...

He couldn't quite get to the last line, so he says, "Sing it with me, Daddy!"

"You mean, this one,

Do you know the muffin man? That one?"

"Yes! Yes! Sing that song with me!"

And so he did and they sang it to the end. Together. Because that's the way we open the shutters, cast off the pall, roll away the stone, hold hands, and make it to the country of grace for today.

***Affirmation of Faith** The Apostles' Creed p. 35

***Hymn** 580 Gloria Patri

Special Music

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Living God,

You have opened our eyes to see the glory of this new day;

now open our lips to tell of the empty tomb;

open our hearts to believe the Good News;

and strengthen us in body and spirit to carry your message of hope into the world,

In your mercy, heal the suffering, mend our brokenness, restore our relationships, save us from

hostility and harsh judgments, show us our purpose, impart wisdom to those in the halls of

governments, and bring peace to your world. We pray for ourselves, giving thanks for your

sustaining love that has comforted us in our pain and blessed us with occasions of joy.

We pray for those among us and those in our hearts who are need of healing- of body, mind, or

spirit. We pray for the victims of violence everywhere, especially mindful of the tragic events

this week in New York City. We grieve with our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and Eastern

Europe who are victims of a cruel regime and seek intervention that leads to peace.

We pray as Jesus taught us, saying, 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us

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

***Hymn** 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

***Hymn** 606 Doxology

***Hymn** 826 Lift High the Cross

Or

Hymn 268 Crown Him With Many Crowns

***Blessing**

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Christ is risen!

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Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

***Postlude**