

Worship-at-Home

April 17, 2022

*Easter Sunday*

**God calls us to worship:**

*(Congregational response in bold type)*

The Lord is risen!

**He is risen indeed!**

Psalm 118:19-20, 22-24 (Red: 576; Blue: 565; Large Print: 957)

**Hymn:** #243 “Jesus Christ is risen today”

**We offer our prayers:**

Prayer of Praise and Supplication:

Gracious, life-giving God,  
maker of all things visible and invisible,  
on the first day of the world,  
you spoke and out of chaos came creation.  
Out of shadows came light.  
On the first day of the week,  
Christ was resurrected by your grace,  
and out of death came life.  
And you always come to us through the Holy Spirit,  
to shine light on our way forward,  
offering your gift of new life in Christ Jesus.  
Praise and honour and blessing be to you, O God,  
Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit,  
this day and every day,  
now and always.

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

**God of mercy:  
you have called us to be thankful  
for your good gifts to us,  
but too often we have taken them for granted  
as if we deserved them.**

**You have called us to be hopeful  
through the gospel of Jesus Christ,  
but too often despair has come upon us,  
and the cares of the world  
have weighed us down.**

**You have called us to be joyful  
in the wonder of your presence among us,**

**but too often we become mired in the mundane  
and lose the gift of reverence.**

**By your saving power, O God,  
enable us to celebrate your love for us  
with joy and thanksgiving.**

***God offers the assurance of grace:***

***We offer our lives and resources:***

*Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)*

**Hymn:** #247 "Christ the Lord is risen today"

***God speaks to us:***

**Readings:** Luke 24:1-49 (Red: 85 N.T.; Blue: 90 N.T.; Large Print: 1654)

**Sermon:**

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

That’s a loaded question!

The women didn’t think they were looking for the living. They were coming to say their final good-byes to the one on whom they had placed their hopes.

Jesus had died.

He was buried.

It was over.

There’s a term that often comes up in grief counselling called the “second death.” This refers to the death of hope. When you are grieving, whether because a beloved person has died, or a pet has died, or you’ve lost your job, or your circumstances have undesirably changed and you get to a point where the darkness of disappointment completely overwhelms you and you can no longer imagine even the possibility of goodness; when you eat because you’re simply feeding a bundle of cells, when you breath solely to fill your lungs, when you can’t imagine any hope, it’s called the second death. Some might call it a spiritual death. Your inner landscape is completely flat. Your emotions are dry. The second death is when the original loss consumes you, takes over, and you can no longer imagine any hope.

One way, I think, of interpreting the angels’ question is in light of the second death.

The disciples were at risk of succumbing to the second death. The women were coming to the tomb to embalm the body. To say “good-bye”: the dreams are gone, the hope is gone. The disciples walking the Emmaus Road were overcome by their grief.

There’s a profound pathos in Luke’s description of the disciples’ countenance:

- vv. 17: “They stood still, looking sad.”
- vv. 21 “*But we had hoped* that he was the one who would redeem Israel.”

Their hearts had turned cold. The fire that had sustained them had gone out.

They were living out of the mortal perspective of expected disappointment: Jesus died, it is over. We had hoped, but we were wrong.

Just as a wall suddenly dropped into the path of flowing oil stops the oil from contaminating the surrounding soil, the angels' question interrupts the flow of expected disappointment and stops the contamination of our souls with the dangers of the Second Death:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

In coming to look for Jesus, the women were looking for hope. But they were looking in the tomb. They were living from the perspective of expected disappointment. They were coming to embalm Hope and put Hope to rest.

Except, Hope wasn't there.

Jesus is our source of hope. He is the Living Water for our souls, Bread for our communion, the Light who is the Life of the world. And he wasn't there. He had risen!

Jesus walked out of the tomb, not as a ghostly apparition, but physically – with flesh and blood and wounds!

And yet, he did rise a changed man.

The man who died on Good Friday was the manifestation of disappointment. He had died a sin-filled man.

But the man who rose on Sunday was Hope incarnate!

The Sin that died on Friday rose on Sunday in innocent glory!

When Jesus walked out of the tomb, he left sin buried in the grave!

Notice the change in the disciples from verse 21 to verse 32. “But we had hoped” became “Were not our hearts burning within us?” Expected disappointment became hope. Death became life.

What brought this deliverance from the second death was an encounter with the risen Christ and the accompanying recognition that because Jesus has forgiven sin, not even death is strong enough to deter God's plan to proclaim peace to the nations!

What happened, was repentance: a change of mind. A change of attitude. A change of direction – they got up and went back to Jerusalem!

Repentance isn't a magic protocol that can manipulate the Lord into forgiving sin – He has already done that! Christ's resurrection is the vindication of the cross. That

everything his sacrifice was supposed to accomplish (forgiveness, reconciliation with the Father, healing, deliverance from evil, vanquishing the fear which death holds over our hearts and minds) was indeed accomplished. The church's proclamation is therefore that sin *is* forgiven by Jesus' action on the cross and life in fellowship with God *is* open to us here and now.

Repentance is the action of faith we can choose to take whereby we accept God's irrational grace, believe the unbelievable truth that "The Lord has risen indeed!" and embrace the hope of life that has no limits in reconciled fellowship with the Father through union with the Son, by the mysterious peace of the Holy Spirit.

Christian faith is built on the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life by the forgiveness of sin mediated by the Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Messiah.

Instead of looking for life among the dead, embrace the gospel that He is risen, wait for the clothing of the Holy Spirit, and go forth and proclaim repentance *because* sin is forgiven in Jesus' name!

For the good of our souls, the health of our societies, and the glory of God.

Amen.

*Ministry of Music (Knox)*

***We respond in prayers of thanksgiving and intercession***

God of power and possibility,  
you broke open the tomb that held our Lord.  
Now break open your church,  
tense and tired after months of pandemic restrictions,  
worried over differences and disagreements,  
uncertain about the way ahead in mission and service.  
Guide us with your wise and creative Spirit.

*Keep a brief silence.*

Resurrect, renew and revive your church!

**Hear our prayer.**

God of resurrection and new life,  
you broke into the hearts of Jesus' fearful friends.  
Now break into our relationships with one another.  
Where they are vibrant and life-giving, nurture them.  
Where they are strained by misunderstanding or neglect, reconcile them.  
Heal us with your merciful and engaging Spirit.

*Keep a brief silence.*

Resurrect, renew and revive our life together!

**Hear our prayer.**

God of might and mercy,  
you broke open the schemes of those who stood in the way of your love.  
Now break open the governance of your world.  
Stir the minds and hearts of leaders to work for justice and equitable sharing.  
Where laws are corrupt, where deceptions masquerades as truth,  
and where people suffer under the schemes of those who lust for power,  
confront people with your Spirit of truth and compassion.

*Keep a brief silence.*

Resurrect, renew and revive the community of nations!

**Hear our prayer.**

God of healing and hope,  
you broke the bonds of death which tried to shackle new life.  
Now break into situations of illness, pain, grief, and loss.  
Wherever people are sick in body, mind, or spirit,  
and wherever people mourn the loss of a loved one or a cherished future,  
embrace each one with your Spirit of comfort and courage.

*Keep a brief silence.*

Resurrect, renew and revive our lives!

**Hear our prayer.**

God of Easter Renewal and Resurrection,  
you have broken into our lives again this day.  
Break into all our moments of celebration and joy,  
As well as the circumstances we name in silence before you.

*Keep a brief silence.*

By your Spirit, give us gratitude, generosity  
and the grace to understand each other.

Resurrect, renew and revive our souls and spirits!

**Hear our prayer.**

Now we pray in one voice the words that Jesus gave us:

**The Lord's Prayer**

***God sends us with God's blessing:***

**Hymn:** #249 "The day of resurrection"

**Blessing:**