
SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION

Easter follows closely on the events of Good Friday. The cries of the assembled crowd, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" are now replaced with a more peaceful and comforting proclamation, "He is not here. He is risen!" And the world is forever changed!

Think of times in your life where some event or experience changed forever the course or trajectory of your life. Sometimes those events are dramatic; sometimes those experiences are rather subtle. Most of us have more than one such occurrence in our lives. We followers of Jesus believe and proclaim that Easter is one such event and when one encounters the risen Christ it can be a life changing experience!

As I ponder the reality of the resurrection it seems to be one of those stories that are just too good to be true! Like me, you may find yourself wondering, "If only I could have been there or could meet the risen Jesus face-to-face!" To us the writer of John's gospel assures us, "blessed are those who believe without seeing!" Ah, good news indeed!

Or consider the words of St. Paul. Even then the story of the resurrection was not easily accepted or believed. The apostle considers the possibility that the Resurrection did not happen:

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Cor. 15:12-19)

He makes for a rather convincing argument that I find reassuring particularly when I find my faith to begin sagging! I really love that last part: if the resurrection is not true then, "we of all people are most to be pitied." Still, this is pretty incredible news. If only we could prove the resurrection, but what proof would be sufficient or compelling to bring one to faith if that person did not believe in the first place?

Faith comes as a gift by the power of the Holy Spirit! We gather again this Easter Sunday to worship the One we believe to have died a cruel death on a cross only to be raised from the dead with the promise that we will be raised as well! We take it on faith, perhaps the most dramatic and yet subtle of life-changing events and experiences!

Thanks be to God, Christ is risen!

Love, joy and peace,

Pastor Ron



Easter Sunday, 2016

The season of Lent began with the reminder to, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return". It was a reminder of the fragility of our human lives and that they are destined to end. Today we celebrate that, "Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!" This Lord Jesus has changed everything. Because of him, we who are dust have the hope of eternal life.

Easter is the day we proclaim the victory of God in Christ Jesus. In rising from the grave, Jesus has defeated sin, death, and the devil. Jesus shows us that he, and not the powers of evil and destruction, is the ultimate power in creation. Death cannot hold him because he has broken the doors of death wide open.

This matters to you and I because Jesus is the one who has claimed us in our baptism. Jesus has made us his own, and as he reminds us in John 15, "I will lose nothing that the Father has entrusted to my hand."

This means that the great God of heaven and earth, the one who brought life and light into being, the creator of all that is has you and will not let you go. You belong to God in Christ Jesus.

We all too often turn away from him, but we can be sure that Jesus Christ will never turn away from us. Never forget that this gift of life with Christ and our salvation from sin and eternal death comes at a great cost. We celebrate this day that Jesus rose from the dead. But we must remember that to rise Jesus first had to die. Jesus suffered a horrible death on the cross.

On that cross is the God who loves us so much that he would not abandon us to sin and destruction. Jesus held nothing of himself back, he loved this world so much that he would rather sacrifice himself than see us be destroyed. Jesus Christ would rather die than lose you forever.

This happened because of the great love that God has for us and for all of this world. God stops at nothing to save us. God, in Christ Jesus, pours his life out for the sake of this world. In Jesus we see that we are loved so much that our Savior would give all. Because he has done this, we now have the hope of eternal life in him. Without him we are dust, because of him we are children of God who have life in him.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you now and always.

+Bishop Michael Rhyne



Easter is early this year, and in many places across this church trees will still be bare and fields barren. It might even snow. But on Easter morning we will gather to greet the risen Son and give thanks to God for the new life we have in Jesus Christ.

Two things come to mind this Easter when there is still only the hint of spring: Jesus' words to his disciples just before his crucifixion and a hymn.

Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus was talking about his death, but he was also assuring his disciples and us that death is not the end, that, though it might seem impossible and even terrifying to step into the void, God brings life out of death.

The hymn is ELW 379.

*Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
love lives again, that with the dead has been;
love is come again like wheat arising green.*

The tune is actually a French Christmas carol. How perfect that, in the bleak midwinter, the promise of spring was planted.

St. Paul wrote, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" We have already fallen into the earth and died. "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." We will not remain alone. We will bear fruit.

The seed has been planted in all the barren places in the world and in our lives. That gives us the power and the hope – especially in the face of our brokenness – to see life where the world only sees death ... in refugee camps and hospice units, in parched earth and in floods, in oppression and denied justice we are bold to confess. Now the green blade rises. Now love lives again. Now love comes again like wheat arising green.

Christ is risen.

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The State College Choral Society will present the final performance of its 67th concert season, which includes a Pennsylvania Premiere sure to be a highlight of the musical life in our area:

REMEMBRANCE

Sunday, April 10, 2016, at 4:00 p.m. Worship Hall, Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, Penn State University

Thomas Beveridge **Felix Mendelssohn** *Hear My Prayer*
 Johannes Brahms *Alto Rhapsody*
Yizkor Requiem: A Quest for Spiritual Roots (PENNSYLVANIA PREMIERE)
 Benjamin Warschawski, *tenor/Cantor*
 Laura Choi Stuart, *soprano*
 Heather Johnson, *mezzo-soprano*

The *Yizkor Requiem* is a powerful declaration of faith, combining the memorial services of the Jewish and Catholic religions and illustrating musically the common themes of the two rituals. As a wonderful complement to the Beveridge, the Choral Society will also perform one of Brahms' most famous vocal works, *Alto Rhapsody*, as well as Mendelssohn's most popular short choral work, *Hear My Prayer*. The Choral Society will perform with 3 nationally recognized soloists and a 19-piece orchestra.

Free pre-concert lecture by composer Thomas Beveridge begins at 3:00 p.m.

Concert co-sponsors: Mimi Barash Coppersmith and Barbara R. Palmer

Additional support: Central Pennsylvania Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the Centre County Board of Commissioners

Tickets are \$20 general admission/\$10 students. Available at the door, online at www.schoralsociety.org or call 814 - 404 - 9223 for information.
