

In Rising

Death and Life: Part 2 “In Rising”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – April 9, 2023

Easter Sunday

Readings: John 20:1-18; Acts 10:34-43

Reflection: Psalm 30

Greeting: Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayer: Almighty God, through Jesus Christ you overcame death and opened to us the door of eternal life. Renew and refresh us in your Holy Spirit as we celebrate the miracle of the empty tomb. Let the light of our Lord’s resurrection lift our hearts on this day. May we be freed from slavery to sin and death and arise into a life of righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 30

The I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and did not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, “I shall never be moved.” By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed. To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication: “What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!” You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.
(Psalm 30 NRSV*)

We read the words of Psalm 30 and hear of redemption in God. That the favor of the Lord is everlasting. We celebrate knowing that God turns our mourning into dancing and our sorrow into joy. That God’s light lifts us from the darkness. How do you give thanks for God’s grace? How do you invite others to share in that grace? What does the resurrection mean to you? How can we come together to experience God’s great love? How have our hearts and lives been changed forever because of our Risen Savior?

Prayer: O God, our light, our beauty, our rest: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your new creation. Form us into your people and order our lives in you. We

thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. May we experience your grace in our laughter and our tears. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in celebration, knowing you are with us. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from John chapter 20 verse 1 through verse 18.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her. (Matthew 27:27-50 NRSV)*

Our next reading comes from Acts chapter 10 verse 34 through verse 43.

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God

raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”. (Acts 10:34-43 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This glorious morning, we reflect on the resurrection. We reflect on the promise that keeps hope alive, even in the darkest of hours. We reflect on the promise of life beyond death, a promise of something more. And yet the resurrection is also a symbol of all of our hopes. Hope that we have in being accepted. Hope in being forgiven. Hope that not even the end is truly the end because we believe in new beginnings and new creation. It is a hope that unites us in tragedy because we are overflowing with love. It is a hope that the darkness can never extinguish the light completely, because today is a reminder that the light of Christ is always with us.

We see it in the surprise the disciples have. That this hope is unexpected. That even though they knew they still didn't understand. They had been told but had yet to fully believe. So it is that we see Mary Magdalene come to the tomb. When she sees the stone has been rolled away she gets the disciples. They come and they see that Jesus is not there. And they return home. But Mary remains. Mary remains to keep vigil over the tomb. She remains in her sorrow. And yet, in that sorrow she becomes the first to truly know about Christ. Because when Mary looks into the tomb, she sees two angels! Not just an empty tomb, but messengers. They want to know why she's weeping and she says it's because her Lord has been taken away. She then turns around to see an unknown person standing there. She is asked why she is weeping and who she is looking for. Mary supposes this person must be the gardener, coming to tend to the garden where the tomb is. She asks him if he has taken the body somewhere, and if he has, she will take the body away herself. It is then that Jesus reveals himself to her. Just in saying her name it is enough for her to know who it is. She immediately knows that it is Christ. She has seen him and in rising he has given her new hope. And in this instance, I believe she finds new life because she has been lifted up from despair. He tells her to return and to tell the others what she has seen. So, she returns and announces to the disciples “I have seen the Lord.” She shares her hope with them.

I'm always reminded of that hope when I think about the resurrection. Because I can't help but think about the resurrection with the sorrow of the crucifixion. That in death we see a sacrifice made in love so that we could understand what true love is. And in rising Christ shows us new creation, a new beginning, a new possibility through grace. Both in a life beyond death but also in living anew in this life. Not just a resurrection to come at the end of everything, but a chance for us here in now to be born of the Spirit, to live our life renewed. We are renewed in God's love and God's grace. We are given hope beyond hope. Because in rising Christ shows that there is no obstacle that we cannot overcome. There is no darkness that can completely

extinguish the light. Peter tells us what we are to do with this hope. Not to sit idly by and wonder. Not to simply keep it to ourselves but to share. We share to give others hope. We share to let others know that forgiveness is for them. We share the message so that all may know peace. We share so that all may know love. We share so that all may know God's grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

That is the message that I share with you this day. That is what I carry in my heart always. Because of God's great love, grace has been shown to us. It is a free gift given by our God inviting us into a life in Christ. That we may all join together that we may all experience God's love. That we may be forgiven, no matter who we are, no matter what we have done, because we can be born of the Spirit to find a new life in Christ. We let the Holy Spirit guide us and lead us so that we may experience a love that can drive out all fear. It is a love that can drown out all hate. It is a love that refuses to let us be indifferent to the suffering of others. It is a love that strengthens us to stand up against any injustice. Because by the spirit we are given the strength of one who would give up his life for others. We are given the strength of one who knows that nothing can extinguish the light. That we are strengthened in the bond that we share knowing that we cannot be separated from God's love. We cannot be separated from God's mercy. We cannot be separated from God's grace. And knowing that gives us the strength to endure all things because it gives us the strength to love. And in resurrection we find hope for this life and the next. We find a strength for this life and the next. And in rising we discover a forgiveness that carries us from this life to the next and a bond in love that will never end. So, it is with love and hope on this day that I declare: Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Death and Life

Our current series is a 3-part exploration of death and life. We will work our way through death on a cross, resurrection, and what it means for how we live. We begin with Palm Sunday, Easter, and the Sunday after. Each week confronts another part of our faith journey through death and life.

April 2nd – *In Dying* – Matthew 21:1-11; Matthew 27:27-50

April 9th – *In Rising* – John 20:1-18; Acts 10:34-43

April 16th – *In Living* – Acts 2:14a, 22-32; 1 Peter 1:3-9

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Our Healthcare Workers	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Phyllis Gabel	Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor
Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Jackie Potter	Phil Hawickhorst
Ray Carr	Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Family of Kyle Lehman	Corrine Howard	Stacy Janes	Don Gilmore
Shirley Jester	Connie Brown	Jack Pitcher	Family of Alberta Darling
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lavon Figgins		

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