

Sunday, April 9, 2023 – Resurrection of Our Lord

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Introduction

This is the day the Lord has made! Christ is risen, and through him all creation is made new! Indeed, “God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34): Christ’s resurrection truly brings life to everyone. We sing hymns of praise, gather around sacred words, and proclaim God’s faithfulness, power, and love in the feast of holy communion. With the women at the tomb, we are astonished, elated, and grateful. We depart with joy to proclaim the good news of God’s endless love.

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: Acts 10:34-43

Peter’s sermon, delivered at the home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer, is a summary of the essential message of Christianity: Everyone who believes in Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the words of the prophets, “receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

³⁴Peter began to speak to [the people]: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how 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. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not 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. ⁴²He 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. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the | LORD is good;
God's mercy en- | dures forever.

²**Let Israel | now declare,
"God's mercy en- | dures forever."**

¹⁴The LORD is my strength | and my song,
and has become | my salvation.

¹⁵**Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents | of the righteous:
"The right hand of the | LORD acts valiantly!"**

¹⁶The right hand of the LORD| is exalted!
The right hand of the | LORD acts valiantly!"

¹⁷**I shall not | die, but live,
and declare the works | of the LORD.**

¹⁸The LORD indeed pun- | ished me sorely,
but did not hand me o- | ver to death.

¹⁹**Open for me the | gates of righteousness;
I will enter them and give thanks | to the LORD.**

²⁰"This is the gate | of the LORD;
here the righ- | teous may enter."

²¹**I give thanks to you, for you have | answered me
and you have become | my salvation.**

²²The stone that the build- | ers rejected
has become the chief | cornerstone.

²³**By the LORD has | this been done;
it is marvelous | in our eyes.**

²⁴This is the day that the | LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be | glad in it.

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: Matthew 28:1-10

Sorrow gives way to "fear and great joy" when two women are sent by an angel to proclaim the good news: Jesus is risen!

¹After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need, saying “Risen Lord, in your mercy,” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

A brief silence.

You call your church to witness to your salvation. We give thanks for (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer and*) all theologians, preachers, and teachers who proclaim your gospel. Equip all the baptized to share the joy of the resurrection in all we say and do. Risen Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You bring abundant life throughout creation. The green blade rises, and all creation greets the resurrection dawn. Preserve vineyards and orchards and those who tend to them. Feed us with the fruits of creation. Risen Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You show your steadfast love without regard to borders, barriers, or human-made divisions. Infuse your justice in every nation of the world (*places of concern or conflict may be named*) that all experience the peace that only you can give. Risen Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You anointed your Son with the Holy Spirit and with power. Encourage us by his example in our ministries of healing, care, and outreach. We pray for all who are sick or hospitalized (*especially*) and for all health care workers who care for them. Risen Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have put gladness in our hearts. Inspire musicians and dancers to rejoice with songs of victory. Bless the music ministries of this congregation and all who foster our assembly’s song. Risen Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As you have raised Jesus from the dead, you show us your resurrection promise. With your holy ones who have sung your praise (*especially*), free us from fear and empower us to go and tell the good news. Risen Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ’s resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.
Amen.

A reflection for this Easter Sunday...

Hidden with Christ

Easter turns the world upside down. It defies our expectations with hiddenness and bluntness: Mary does not recognize the resurrected Jesus (John 20:14), the good news is heralded by an earthquake and terrifying angels and is brought to the women of the church first, rather than to the Twelve (Matt. 28:1-10). The radical reversals prophesied in scripture and revealed in Christ's life and ministry culminate in the good news we proclaim today: Christ, through death, has triumphed over death. "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Ps. 118:22).

Easter offers the mystical possibility of transformation in every moment. In this season, what is dying and what is being born? For our communities? For our families? For our world? What is breaking open like a seed to die (John 12:24) so that new life might thrive?

The theme is framed candidly in Colossians: "You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). In the season of Easter, we are invited to allow old husks to fall away so that Christ's new life may emerge. This part of the resurrection story is strange, unsettling. We are invited, after all, to share fully in Christ's death as well as his resurrection (Rom. 6:5; 2 Cor. 4:10-11). Terrifying, but in the mystery of the Holy Spirit's work in us, we receive it as hope (1 Peter 1:3).

On this Easter day, we are honest about how God is stirring us to transformation, and we may be called to faithfully lament the letting go. Almost simultaneously, as we embody Christ's resurrection in the present, we celebrate it with great joy (Matt. 28:8). In our desire to be hidden in Christ's abundant life (John 10:10), we can even name seasons of suffering as Christ's resurrection emerging (Phil. 3:10).

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