

Jesus' Resurrection—And Ours

Easter Sunday

April 9, 2023

The Rev. Dr. Mario Gonzalez del Solar
St. David's Episcopal Church, North
Chesterfield, VA

Acts 10:34-43 (NRSV)

Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ 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; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Colossians 3:1-4 (NRSV)

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above,

not on things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Matthew 28:1-10 (NRSV)

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

Happy Easter! I hope each and every one of you has a blessed and happy day today. It’s a day when families gather, and a day for Easter baskets and I understand there’s an Easter egg hunt after the 10:00 service. All in a happy time of year, the Spring.

My sermon last Sunday was titled “Jesus’ Suffering—And Ours”. This morning I’d like to talk about Jesus’ resurrection—and ours. Of course the reason we have Easter is because of Jesus’ suffering and death. You can’t have a resurrection without a death. Now don’t get me wrong—I’m an Episcopalian, and I’m all for the church year. But because the church year takes us through Jesus’ life a little at a time, it breaks events in Jesus’ life into different episodes—birth, death, resurrection, coming of the Holy Spirit—and we tend to miss the whole story. We miss the towering enormity of what God has done for us in Jesus. By looking only at Jesus’ resurrection, we’re missing what it means for us and for all time. So today we’ll look at both Jesus’ resurrection—and ours.

Let’s look at Jesus’ resurrection. First of all, he was dead. The Nicene Creed says, “**he suffered death and was buried.**” The Apostles’ Creed says, “**he was crucified, died, and was buried.**” The disciples saw him die. Peter tells us this morning that “**They put him to death by hanging him on a tree.**” Last week we

heard that **“Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.”** (Matthew 27:56 NRSV) Joseph of Arimathea claimed the body and put it in his own tomb.

So—as far as the disciples were concerned, this whole exciting chapter of their lives with Jesus was over. His whole movement was finished overnight. He was dead and buried. They were grief-stricken, panicked, and confused. Why did this happen? What was left for them now? What would they do? Where would they go? This is the voice of grief.

Like many people grieving a loss, the Marys want to *do* something. So they go to the tomb. Matthew says they went to see it. Mark tells us they brought spices to anoint Jesus’ dead body. But at the tomb their world is shaken again, not by Jesus’ death, but by an earthquake and an angel flooding them with brilliance like a bolt of lightning. He has opened the tomb, but not to let Jesus out. Jesus was long gone. The angel rolls back the stone to let the women see the tomb is empty.

I heard a Baptist preacher say once that **“Jesus broke up every funeral he attended.”** But here Jesus is breaking up the grief of the people who think they’ve lost him. They weren’t expecting Jesus to be arrested, to be unjustly condemned, and to be killed. It was unthinkable. But it happened. But three days later, it’s even more unthinkable: to hear what the angel has to say: **“He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.”** It *was* unthinkable. Dead folks don’t just get up out of their graves and walk away. But the women realize that Jesus had warned his disciples this was going to happen. They just couldn’t internalize it.

So, delirious with joy and confusion, they run to tell the disciples. And whom do they run into but Jesus himself. They throw themselves at his feet. He repeats the angel’s instructions—tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee. And of course, if we had read on, we’d see that’s what happened.

Jesus rose from the dead. But what does that mean for us? It means that the cosmic Lord and Creator of the universe went through death and defeated it forever. It means the **“author of life”** (Acts 3:15 NRSV) has made God’s own unending life available to the population of the world hemmed in by death. All this is by God’s free gift of grace. Paul says, **“This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”** (2 Timothy 1:9-10 NRSV)

People aren't naturally immortal. In our natural state, all we can look forward to is God's judgment. But when we put our trust in Jesus, he abolishes death. He infuses us with his own eternal life, the life that has been before time and will be after it's over. It's as though God reached down from eternity and literally brought eternal, indestructible life out of Jesus' tomb that first Easter morning. And he spread it around to all who trust in Jesus.

In his death, Jesus took God's judgment for all who trust in him on himself. In his resurrection, Jesus includes the faithful in his resurrection: we will rise from the dead just as he did. Paul puts it this way in Romans 6: **"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 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."** (Romans 6:3-5 NRSV)

There were people in Paul's congregation at Corinth who didn't believe that Jesus' resurrection had anything to do with them. In his first letter to them, Paul describes exactly what it has to do with them—and us: **"But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.**

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, **"The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.**

What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on

immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-58 NRSV)

This is a mundane example, but Jesus’ resurrection is like that first kernel of microwave popcorn you hear pop after you’ve put the bag in the microwave. It means that the others are soon to follow. The Bible calls Jesus “**the firstborn from the dead.**” (Colossians 1:18) That means that he’s the first to be resurrected, and all those who put their trust in him will follow. We will be like him, full of God’s own eternal, immortal life.

This is not just flowery religious language. It’s what we mean when we end the Creed by saying, “**We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.**” We don’t just believe in it—we are *looking forward to it*.

So—Happy Easter! May the mighty Lord who has conquered death bless you and all those you love with his indestructible life this day and always!

Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

Amen.