

# ὁ λόγος παρακλήσεως: Easter Sunday B (4 April 2021)

St. Thomas', Glassboro

The Rev. Todd Foster

*Time-stamp: <2021-04-03 Sat 15:03>*

## **Collect**

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Acts 10:34-43, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Mark 16:1-8, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24*

## **1 Readings**

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!)

We gather today to proclaim good news! We have just lived through Holy Week, a week wherein we told the story of Jesus' death over and over again. We heard Psalm 22 (*Miserere mei*, or in English, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me...") three or four times, depending on how many of St. Thomas' services you took advantage of this week.

But today our readings have turned. From suffering and death, we have turned to resurrection. In our first reading, St. Peter proclaims the Resurrection. In our second reading, St. Paul proclaims the Resurrection. In the third lesson, though, in our Gospel reading today, something even more enchanting happens.

Our third lesson is not a sermon or an epistle. It is not a speech. Our third lesson is a narrative, telling the story of three women: Mary, Mary, and Salome. These were Jesus' friends. Jesus had a lot of friends, if you asked the friends. But just the day before, when it really counted, one of his closest friends, St. Peter, denied even knowing Jesus. The week had started off well enough, with the people of Jerusalem welcoming Jesus with shouts of Hosanna and by laying palm branches in his path: the red carpet treatment! The crowds were there to celebrate the Passover. But after a tumultuous week of ups and downs, Jesus was tortured and lynched by a lethal combination of an angry mob and an unconcerned government.

And now it was the second morning after. The main holiday celebration was finished, though the holiday lingered on. Jesus had died and been buried in a tomb. The culturally appropriate thing to do for a dead friend or family member was to anoint them with spices so they wouldn't smell so bad as their body rotted away. Though Jesus had 12 close friends he had called apostles, none of these showed up to express their love or respect in this way. None of the men did. Just these three women. They got up early in the morning, before it was properly light out, and went to care for their friend, whom they loved. And their big question this morning, since all the men are hiding out or sleeping in, is how they will get into the tomb with that big rock over the entrance.

So it was quite a surprise when Mary, Mary, and Salome arrived at the tomb only to find the stone already removed. Jesus was gone, they were told: he is alive and on the move. We're told the women ran away in fear and amazement telling no one. And that's the end of the Gospel, by Mark's telling.

But these brave women, lovers of Jesus, didn't stay silent for long. That's the untold ending of Mark that got added by someone else with less trust in future generations of readers. Mary, Mary, and Salome were the first evangelists, the first to announce the Resurrection of Christ and all that that might mean.

## **2 Resurrection**

What does the Resurrection of Christ mean? What does it mean for us today? What does it mean to say "The Lord is risen indeed!" in the age of the corona-virus, Zoom, and vaccination drives? What does the Resurrection mean in an era of clashing voices about whose lives matter, what justice means, and whose votes should count? What does the Resurrection mean in lives marked by broken relationships, lost jobs, mass evictions, and chemical addiction? What does the Resurrection mean for us today?

The Resurrection means many things – but in its essence the Resurrection holds for us the same promises it held for Mary, Mary, and Salome. Resurrection means that the things that hurt us, body, mind, and spirit, will not ultimately prevail. Resurrection means that love wins, life wins, relationship wins. Resurrection means that every loss that matters is not final, but only temporary at most. Resurrection means that those who would turn their backs on their friends like St. Peter did, and those who would commit hate crimes against people who look or think differently from them like St. Paul did, are never beyond hope. Resurrection means the same things for all of us, and Resurrection means something intimate and personal and unique for every one of us. Resurrection means that death is not the final truth of reality, but life; hate will not get the last word, but love will.

## **3 What we do in church**

Because of the Resurrection we gather as the Church, the people of God, not in order to earn certain benefits or to be deemed worthy or righteous of some grand prize. Instead, what we do in church is what Mary, Mary, and Salome did. We learn to love each other. We learn to love Jesus. We learn how to show up. And as we show up, we discover that God was there way ahead of us, just waiting to love us.

God is not a mugger. God doesn't force God's will on us, not even when that will is love better than any parent or lover could offer. Instead, God is waiting by that empty tomb, waiting for us to show up. Early in the morning or later on if need be. You get to choose the timing. The important thing is showing up. If you show up you'll find that God is there waiting for you.

This is the good news of Easter, the good news of the Resurrection. The story of God is not primarily a story of theology or of history or of geo-politics. God's story touches on all those things. But the story of God is the story of a relationship, and of love that is meant for you. Despite human-kind's best efforts to ignore that story, to replace that story with other stories, the story of Jesus remains, dispelling darkness and bringing light where-ever it goes. As God tells this story throughout history and throughout each human life, all we have to do, like Jesus' friends Mary, Mary, and Salome, is to show up!

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! (The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!)