

EASTER DAY A

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Today the Alleluias return to our worship. The time of Lent's fasting and withdrawal are ended. The journey and mission of the Lord Jesus is complete. He is the conqueror over death and sin! Death could not hold him in the grave. He is alive and he lives to God. He lives within you and me.

We live into Jesus resurrection as Christians ready to "know him" and "make him known."

Today we are invited with the two Mary's and Salome to look into the empty tomb, to see for ourselves with the eyes of faith, to understand with our minds and ultimately believe. If you do all the above: look, see, and understand, but do not go all the way to receive the gift of faith then Christ for you is still dead and coming to church is a waste of time. Death rules the earth. Without the eyes of faith, death appears to be in charge.

Mary Magdalene was the very first to see Jesus Messiah risen. Before she knew who he was, before she believed, her understanding was like all the other disciples – she had not arrived at what the scriptures had foretold. The Hebrew scriptures point to the Holy One of Israel being rejected by his own people, put to death by their consent at the hands of Roman oppressors and be risen.

Not to be raised would merely make him a martyr for a few who followed him. If he did not rise our faith, according to St. Paul, would be in vain. To be raised from a death imposed by the greatest power on earth at that time meant that Jesus message, his life and his reign over his kingdom would remain with us forever and transcend all time, all races and all religions.

What troubles people is the fact that Easter comes and goes but the reign of God does not appear to be any closer. What would the reign of God look like anyway? Could we recognize it?

The love of God is not always apparent in the hearts of men. Injustice, inequality and hatred are everywhere. Though we just read that anyone from any nation that reverences God and does what is right is acceptable to God so many go on with life unchanged by the message of Christ.

So where is the power of Christ's resurrection today? His power is present in the very lives of those who will look, who will see, and

believe. Being made alive to God are for those who have taken hold of this man Jesus Christ for themselves. His power is manifest in varying degrees in the lives of those who have made the Christ life their priority. So we have the Dr. Martin Luther King's, we have the Mother Teresa's of Calcutta and the ordinary saints who to the best of their ability live a life worthy of the name of Jesus Christ.

For those who have looked, have seen, shrugged their shoulders and gone away unchanged, it may be that their faith is still seeking understanding. We can't give up hope. The Lord Jesus is praying for them as well. The experience of the resurrection may lie trapped in the minds of unbelieving men and women. Smart people too have a difficult time accepting a Savior who loved them and wants them to be disciples. Honest and good people see the truth in the midst of struggling to understand the existence of evil and suffering and why God allows it.

Was there no other way to prove God's love to a lost world other than Christ's horrible death? No, I don't believe there is. For God chooses to endure the punishment for sin himself. If the world was judged and a natural cataclysm occurred, such as a large asteroid striking the earth might not God's message of love be swallowed up by judgment and death? We read in scripture there is no love in fear or punishment. God's love could not be made perfect that way. Perfect love casts out fear and punishment. That perfect love was Jesus Christ and it can make you and I perfect and complete by the Power of his Love.

So the high priest Caiphas in his prophecy concerning Jesus death was so true. One man had to die for the good of a nation. What he could not see was that Jesus of Nazareth's death would be no ordinary execution. For people of faith for ages to come, his death would absorb the guilt, the judgment, and punishment of the whole world.

Now Jesus' love continues to look, to see, and to give faith, to everyone who will come. At Eastertide we celebrate our life returning again as Christians. We stand for prayer instead of kneel. We say and sing "alleluias." And we seek our life hidden in Christ so when he appears again so will we appear with him in glory. We live that life by being the best Christian, the most devoted disciple we can be. We seek the things above and not below. We see things differently from here on.

Before you leave here today I invite you to come with God's people here at Trinity on a journey toward New Beginnings. It is a journey to reclaim God's people and this community of faith. We go together and not alone. We can't go down the path God would have us to go without every member. So we are asking you, especially those we see so rarely, to come, to sign up for our very brief schedule of classes called New Beginnings, to help each Christian rediscover My Church, My Spirituality and My Ministry for the glory of God. May we live into the Christ life, know the power of his resurrection and make him known. Amen.