

Easter Sunday, Year C – April 17, 2022

Luke 24:1-12

Epiphany, Winnipeg

Paul Sartison

1 Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

The women came to the tomb and found that the door was open and the body was gone, and they were perplexed. Perplexed? Perplexed is when you say “That’s strange, I was sure my exam was tomorrow. You say it’s next week?” Perplexed is when you assemble the new desk you got at IKEA and when it’s all done you have three screws left over. Perplexed is when you can’t find your glasses but you’re sure you left them here somewhere...

Perplexed is not when you come to honour your friend’s grave and you find that the tomb is open and the body is gone. That’s shocked. That’s terrified. But they were perplexed. Maybe the women who came to the tomb really were just perplexed, because in the last few days there had been too much to take in and too much had happened beyond all of their control. They had just run out of emotion, and “perplexed” was about as much as they were able to feel just then.

And then two strangers in shiny white robes say, “Remember how he said he would rise again?” And then...Mary Magdalene and Joanna and another Mary and the other women remember. Maybe they’re still perplexed. But they remember. They remember that word that perplexed them before: that God could bring life out of death. And they go to remind the others.

Remember how he said that in three days he would rise? Remember?

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah.

2 Maybe you remember something like this. Just over two years ago we closed the church doors for a few weeks. It turned out that this whole Coronavirus thing was what they were saying it would be, so we all did what was the right and careful and caring thing to do and we moved our worship and most of our life online, and we stayed away from here for awhile. In those first few weeks I remember people saying with a chuckle, “Wow, could you imagine if this lasted til Easter?” And I remember saying, “That’ll never happen.” Then it happened, and when we knew that we weren’t going to be together for Easter a lot of us said “But we’ll be back soon, and Easter will be a few weeks late but when we are back together what a party we’ll have. We should have a banquet. Easter’s gonna be great!” But then we didn’t come back soon, but we tried a few times. And then another Easter went by. And we tried later on to be together again. And then we weren’t. And now it’s Easter. It’s great to be here, but it’s not as whiz-bang as some of us might have thought it would be a few years ago. Maybe it’s even a bit perplexing. How are we supposed to do this?

We’ve been scattered, sort of off in our own places, sort of like disciples and friends of Jesus who kept quiet and laid low after all that happened on Friday. It has tested our hope and strained everyone’s mental health to a greater or lesser extent. Oh, and it’s been a long winter and then there was all that snow last week once winter was over. Just one more thing. We’re a little worn out by one thing after another and now we come back to the site of the empty tomb and maybe you too are...a little like me...maybe not quite sure what to make of this or how to do it. Or just too tired. Even perplexed.

But then we hear that news from two strangers at the tomb. Remember how he said he would rise again after three days? And we remember. And just like disciples who were scattered, and whose emotions were stretched thin, and still felt broken or traumatized after all that happened, we begin to be brought back together by this news. Remember? And we remember.

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

And if you're still perplexed or I am or we all are, that's OK. Because Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. And our plain and simple task is to remind each other that God will bring life out of death. We'll help each other remember. We'll help the world remember.

And we all need help remembering, don't we? I won't give you my own list here or try to run through the highlights of the news; just take a moment and hold in your mind those places and peoples and situations you're hearing about or that are weighing the world down today....

Remember what Jesus said? He'll be handed over and be killed and after three days will rise. After three days will rise. Because God is doing a new thing, God will make life where there was death. God will make life that is stronger than new variants of viruses and new variants of violence. God will make life that will always rise up in the face of hate or fear.

I won't give you my own list here; just take a moment and hold in your mind the ways that you have known dying and grief...long ago or just these days...

Remember what Jesus said? He'll be handed over and be killed and after three days will rise. After three days will rise. Because God is doing a new thing, God will make life where there was death.

Here's a little homework assignment for you. Sometime today grab a computer or a phone and Google "Orthodox Icon Resurrection." If you're not a computer person just close your eyes and imagine...

What you'll find so often if you see an icon of the Resurrection from churches in the Eastern Orthodox churches – like the ones in Russia and Ukraine, you know... - you'll see images with Christ at the centre, and the images are full of glory and wonder and haloes and brightness that shines in places where you maybe couldn't see. The images are rich in colour, so rich that even someone like me who has trouble seeing all the colours can see the diversity and beauty of the resurrection that gives life in so many colours. Christ is surrounded by angels and saints, just like we'll sing about and speak about at communion later on. But the risen Christ is never just standing there alone, just...being risen and miraculous or something. His hand is always reaching out and taking the hand of someone and lifting them out of the grave. Have a look and see, it's really cool.

While we celebrate Christ risen, there's this hand reaching into our graves. Tired and afraid graves. The risen Christ reaches into the grave where one country has invaded another and the world right there is torn in two. The risen Christ reaches into a nice city like Winnipeg where the ugliest racism seems to keep on keeping on; Christ reaches into the landscape of places in South Africa overrun by

flood waters today; Christ reaches into our own troubled places and even into our own grieving. And the risen Christ reaches into the graves of those we mourn, even there new life is breathed where it seemed that only death had spoken. The risen one reaches into the grave and brings back what has died, because there was that time when God reached into the grave and took Jesus by the hand and lifted him out. Because God can always, will always, bring life where there was death.

Remember what he said? Jesus will be handed over to violent hands, and be killed, and after three days he will rise. Life wins, because God can always bring life out of death.

Remember?

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Now I remember. Thanks.

AMEN