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Weekend of Sunday, April 17, 2022
Resurrection of Our LORD/Easter/Year C

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Gospel Reading: John 20:1-18

Sermon Title: “*The Risen Life We Share With Christ*”

Theme

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death,” Paul writes. Today Christ is risen, and we gather together with astonishment and joy. Christ is risen, and we have been set free from the bonds of death. Christ is risen, and we are forgiven. Christ is risen, and with the women at the tomb and Peter, we are amazed. Let us rejoice: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Texts

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43

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.”

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

¹⁹If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²²for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Gospel: John 20:1-18

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes. ¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Sermon

John 20:18 "I have seen the Lord!" Mary Magdalene shouted to the disciples. This is the closing passage of the Gospel Reading for today. That was her announcement to the disciples, including Peter and the disciple Jesus loved.

Earlier that same morning, Mary had found the tomb open, and she ran and told them what she had seen. Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved went to the tomb themselves and verified the story. The unnamed disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, is presumed to be John the author of this Gospel – of course, he is – and he apparently was the faster runner of the two and the first to believe, although believe what is unclear. The men had no answers to this mystery, and so John wrote, they¹⁰ "returned to their homes." Mary was unsatisfied. She went back to the tomb.

Mary was still an emotional wreck over the goings-on of the last couple of days. "None of this makes any sense!" she must have been thinking. She loved this man whom she knew so well and called the Lord of her life. And he knew her better than anyone else and yet loved her despite knowing all the sordid details of her past and did not reject her. But then, in the strangest turn of events, he had been killed – crucified – a most heinous type of capital punishment reserved for the worst of criminals. As she walked hastily in the darkness, she thought, "None of this makes any sense!"

Arriving back at the open tomb, she looked inside, she had not done that in her first visit to the tomb, and that is when she was greeted by two angels who asked her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Honestly, that would have probably freaked me out a little. I've never encountered angels that I am aware of. Mary answered them, but that isn't important.

What is important is that for some reason she turned around and encountered another person whom she presumed to be the gardener, who asked her the same question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" It was in that brief exchange that Mary finally realized she was actually talking to Jesus Christ her Lord! He is risen! And in her exhausted, emotional state, she was so relieved that she threw herself at his feet and clung to him.

Jesus told her not to cling to him because there was Easter work to do. "Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

"He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!"

Did you notice that Jesus called his followers, his brothers? That relationship can be extended to all who believe in and put their faith in the Risen Lord Jesus! The only other place that Jesus called his followers "brothers and sisters" was when he visited his hometown of Nazareth and people were confused about who he was. They wanted to identify him, as many of us do, as the son of so and so, or the daughter of so and so. But post-Resurrection, he identifies his followers as "brothers and sisters." That makes Jesus Christ our brother!

Did you notice that when talking about his followers, Jesus called his Heavenly Father "your God"? He used that expression only a couple of times in the Gospels. But post-Resurrection, he identified his Heavenly Father as his follower's Heavenly Father. That relationship can also be extended to all who believe in and put their faith in the Risen Lord Jesus as well! That makes God our Heavenly Father!

Post-Resurrection, Jesus has significantly changed his relationship with us. We are now his brothers and sisters. Imagine! Jesus is our brother! And he has significantly changed his Heavenly Father's relationship with us. He very clearly states that God is our Heavenly Father too! Imagine being a child of God!

Okay, so maybe that wasn't as earth-shattering for you. After all, we use that kind of language in the church already. It just seems to me that post-Resurrection Jesus was emphasizing the reformulation of divine relationships.

Friends, the official liturgical name for this day is the Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter. If you are a faithful Christian and Jesus is your brother and his Heavenly Father is your Heavenly Father then you've heard the story of the Resurrection of Our Lord, every year your whole life, and you wouldn't want to ever miss it.

Or maybe you are someone who goes to church with Mom or Grandma on Christmas and Easter because that is just what you do. You too have heard the story many times, and this year may just be another in that long series.

No matter who you are or why you are here, I have good news! And it is not "He is risen!" despite what our bulletin cover says. Oh, don't get me wrong, I am a true believer that Jesus Christ, my Lord and my brother, rose from the dead and now lives with our Heavenly Father in heaven for eternity. That is Good News! That is just not the good news I want to focus on today.

The good news that I want to focus on today is that *because* he is risen, he, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and brother is ^{1 Cor 15:20b}"the first fruits of those who have died." What that means is that there will be others, including you and me – no one gets out of this alive, – who have faith in him as Lord and Savior, who are the second fruits of those who have died or will die. But because Jesus Christ, our Lord and our brother, rose from the dead and demonstrated his power and authority over death, we, the second fruits of those who have died or will die, will also be raised too, because we ^{1 Cor 15:23}belong to Christ. He is our brother, and his Heavenly Father is our Heavenly Father.

In the First Reading from Acts 10, Peter, a first-hand eye-witness to the risen Lord Jesus, taught that because God raised him from the dead, he ^{Acts 10:42b}"is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead." And Peter further taught that ^{Acts 10:43b}"everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Now, won't it be nice to have our brother Jesus Christ on the bench when we have our day of judgment?

So the gate to the Garden of Eden, a metaphor for life eternal in heaven with God, our Heavenly Father, is no longer closed by human sin but opened by the risen Lord Jesus Christ, our brother, and available to all who have received forgiveness of sins through faith in him.

Most of us have heard John's account of the Resurrection many times. We can be left wondering how Mary, Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved, could have been so dense. They lived with him, traveled with him, ministered with him, and should have been listening and learning from him for three years, and yet, they did

not pick up on this most important teaching – though he told them this would happen, they still did not believe.

In our soberer moments, we have to admit, he is the only one we know of that has risen from the dead. This just doesn't happen – unless he truly is the Son of God, and that would make all the difference. And if he truly is the Son of God, then he does have lordship over our lives. And we should want to worship him for his many benefits, not the least of which is "The Risen Life We Share With Christ."

So today, whether you've heard it a hundred times before and believed, or whether this is the first time you've actually listened, what I am reminding you of is that post Resurrection, Jesus Christ,

- the one who has power over life and death;
- the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead;
- the one who gives forgiveness of sins through belief in his name;
- the one who wants us to know him as our brother and his Heavenly Father as our Heavenly Father

has just changed everything overnight. Before that Easter, we were lost to our sin. But on that Easter morning, everything changed. I know, "None of this makes any sense!" But because we believe in faith that it really happened, we can enjoy the benefits of "The Risen Life We Share with Christ" and we can enjoy it now.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Prayer

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