

CROWN
Him
with MANY
CROWNS

Crown Him the Lord of life,
Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save;
His glories now we sing
Who died, and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring,
And lives that death may die.



Easter Sunday

April 12, 2020

Prelude:

“Sheep May Safely Graze”

J.S. Bach

Gathering Thoughts:

Dear Brothers and Sisters today we celebrate the most glorious day of the Christian year. It is different as we are isolated and separated from each other. Even with this inconvenience we turn to the basic truths of our beliefs: FAITH – HOPE – LOVE. These three will continue to give us a spirit to survive while we are apart from one another because we are God’s children born of faith in the power of the resurrection. Wherever you are and with whom you celebrate let us rejoice for the victory we all share in the Easter Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Please feel free to share this service with others who may not have the same opportunity to worship

Let Us Rejoice as We Worship:

Leader: The risen Christ lives among us, calling us to be a blessing,

All: Calling us to heal and transform the brokenness and the violence of our world.

Leader: The risen Christ lives among us, calling us to be a blessing,

All: Calling us to seek out the lonely and the lost and those who need to experience God’s love.

Leader: The risen Christ lives among us, calling us to be a blessing,

All: Calling us to be disciples to the world, blessed, healed, and filled with joyous good news!

Opening Hymn:

“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!”

Christ the Lord is ris’n today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heav’ns, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!
Love’s redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids His rise, Alleluia!

Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!
Foll'wing our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

A Time of Prayer:

Holy God, today your glory and power is made known in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are Easter people because Christ is risen. He is alive! And, where you live, life and light, freedom and salvation, hope and reconciliation break out. You penetrate our lives. You propel us to action. You invigorate our love. All praise and honor and glory be yours as we manifest the risen Christ in our worship and in our lives. Amen.

First Reading from the Scriptures Matthew 28:1-10 (NIV)

28After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2And 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. 3His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7Then 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.' 8So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Organ Interlude: "Jerusalem, My Happy Home" Thomas Anderson

Second Reading from the Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 (NIV)

19 If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But 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.

The Message: A Fallen World – A Risen Christ

The date is February 2011. While responding to a suspicious person report, a 46-year-old police officer in St. Petersburg, Florida, is shot to death by a teenager. The officer's death hits that community very hard, not only because it happened, but also because he is St. Pete's third officer within 30 days to die in the line of duty after 30 years with no police officers being shot.

The wounded officer was taken to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Then, as his body was wheeled out of the hospital to go to the medical examiner's office, about two dozen of his comrades lined up outside, saluting as the body passed by. As they then dispersed, a reporter asked one officer for a comment.

The officer simply said, "We live in a fallen world," and then he quietly walked away.

We don't know anything about that officer's religion, but it's possible he had a church background, for the idea that we live in a "fallen" world is a foundational belief of Christianity.

It's unlikely, of course, that that officer -- or any of us, for that matter -- would say that our world is marked only by fallenness. Though many of us may be feeling that emotion at this very moment. For most of us experience life as a mixture of the good and the bad. Imagine that you had a piece of paper in front of you with a line drawn vertically down the center, dividing the sheet into two columns. In the first column -- let's call it GOOD -- you are to write down all the good, enjoyable and happy things of your life, the things you count as blessings. What might go on there? -- the birth of your children, some fun vacations, a hobby or pastime you really enjoy, your good health, life free from worrying about having basic necessities, etc., as well as wider-scale blessings, such as the freedoms we enjoy in America, our relative affluence as a nation, and so on.

Then in the other column -- BAD -- you are to list the things that you count as troubles, pains, bitter disappointments, fears, terrors, griefs and so on. What might go on there? -- worries about your children's choices, crime, fear for personal and family security, chronic pain, unemployment or employment at a job you hate, poor health, etc., as well as such global problems as abused children, poverty, drug use, human trafficking, wars, terrorism, the pandemic that plagues the world and on and on.

Depending on our individual stories, some of us might have a longer list on one side or the other, but suppose for a moment that you could simply take all the bad stuff in the BAD column and with a wave of your hand, make it vanish into thin air, as though it never happened. Your life would consist of only the blessings on the other side of the paper. What might you call your world then? How about "utopia," "paradise" or even "heaven"?

Now suppose, instead, that the awesome stuff in the GOOD column totally disappears and your life consists only of the awful stuff in the BAD column. What might you call your world now? How about "nightmare," "purgatory" or even "hell"?

But life as most of us know it is not just GOOD stuff or just BAD stuff; it's a mix of both. So what do we call that world?

We call it "the real world." Perhaps we call it the "fallen world." Back to the police officer. He's saying that in the world we actually live in -- not the world we'd like to live in -- the BAD side sometimes intrudes into the GOOD side, and that's what happened that fateful day when his comrade was shot to death.

Now let's go back to that two-column list once more. In which column would you put death? Certainly the police officer, thinking of the death of his comrade, was putting it in the BAD column. And no doubt most of us would put it there as well.

But on this side of the resurrection and on this Easter morning, perhaps we can rethink that.

In writing to the Christians in Corinth, Paul talks about the resurrection of the dead, apparently in response to some who were saying there is no such thing. He argues that there is such a thing as the resurrection of the dead, and for proof, he points to the resurrection of Jesus. Listen to Paul's argument from 1 Corinthians 15 again, but this time from *The Message*, which is biblical paraphrase by Eugene Peterson:

"If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.

There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man. Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ. But we have to wait our turn: Christ is first, then those with him at his Coming, the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father. He won't let up until the last enemy is down -- and the very last enemy is death!"

Paul talks about those who trust Christ eventually leaving cemeteries, and that reminds us of those words from Revelation about death being no more. One of the places we sometimes hear those words read aloud is at cemeteries when we're gathered around an open grave, about to lower the casket containing the body of loved one into the ground. There at the graveside, with the chilling winds of winter whipping around us and the icy cold of the snow-covered earth seeping into our feet -- there where we're huddling together trying to find a different kind of warmth, one that has nothing to do with air temperature -- we need to hear this promise from God: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

"The first things have passed away." Another way to say that is: "The fallen world has passed away."

Irish Roman Catholic priest Father Timothy Joyce (1868-1947) said about the work of Christ in relation to the fallen world: "Christ is not here to illuminate the deformity of a fallen world but rather to release a beautiful and holy world from bondage; most of all to release the human person from bondage and dissipate the shadows that lie across all creation."

So what can we do, or what attitudes can we embrace, to follow Christ in a fallen world?

1. Because we follow a risen Christ, we know that sometimes it's not possible to immediately know whether something is BAD or if it's GOOD. We've learned that Jesus has a way of transforming or redeeming things that at first we thought were BAD into beautiful things.
2. When we follow a risen Christ, we know that the events of today are not the end of our story. Our lives are stories being written. And we know that our temporal lives are but a prelude to a life hereafter.
3. Following the risen Christ and being faithful to his teachings will -- in and of itself -- prevent us from making dubious choices, committing unethical practices. In short, following Jesus makes our lives a whole lot better by cutting off potential stupid and bad stuff from ever happening in the first place. When we made a decision to follow Jesus, our lives just got 500 percent better.
4. We can follow the risen Christ by living as he lived -- to serve others. There's a joy in serving others that helps to relieve the bondage and dispel the shadows about which Joyce was speaking (see quotation above).

5. We can follow the risen Christ by resisting the power structures of the fallen world.

6. Following a risen Christ means we no longer let a fallen world define us. See Romans 12:1-2. We live in a fallen world, but we're citizens of another world and we live by its rules, ethics and values.

7. Following a risen Christ means that we do not despair or sorrow as others may despair "as those who have no hope." We follow Jesus in the context of hope.

We do not gather on Easter morning merely to celebrate a miracle that happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago. No, we gather to declare that because he defeated death, Christ is the Lord not only of our lives, but also of our destiny. We live in a fallen world, but we follow a risen Savior who has come to release our world from bondage to death and to put the shadows that are on our lives -- all that terrible BAD column stuff -- into a context of hope, until the day when the kingdom of God comes in its fullness, and BAD stuff is no more!

Organ Interlude: "Victamae Paschali Laudes" George Bradbury

A Time of Prayer – let us remember all of our brothers and sisters on the prayer list, especially those who are having a difficult time during this period of social distancing. Please share your prayer concerns so that they may be added to the prayer list by emailing your concern to Pastor Dave at dbhanks92@comcast.net or by calling him direct at 978-821-9571. He is available every evening and on weekends. During this time we suggest that you create a prayer partner with whom you can pair up until we are able to worship together at the church.

PRAYER LIST

Amy Belli
Jack Brigham
Becky Colwell
Cathy Fontaine
Chuck Funk
Paula Gaudet
Bob and Pat Goguen
Linda Hurd
Sarah Kee

**Kyle, a.k.a, Kippy
Bob and Doris Lane
Diane Lane Cormier
Linda Long
Lorraine Michaud
Family of Stephen Pacheco
Cathie Perra
Family of Constance Pettingell
Maria Piazza
Melanie Pouliot
Alex Robinson
Del Sampson
Elwin Shepard
Ron Smith
Carole Ann Sumner and Henry
Donna Thorne
Marilyn Wales
Patty Westerman**

All who are lonely or depressed

All who are personally dealing with the affects of the COVID-19 Virus

Those who are currently unemployed because of the virus

All medical personnel – doctors, nurses, testing staff, first responders

**Those whose livelihoods have been impacted through lost jobs or
reduced financial stability**

Our government – that they may make timely and wise decisions

Our Church and all of its members

We thank you, O God of great love, for the gift of life on this joyous Easter morning. When we face tombs of darkness and despair, may we stop, listen and hear the voice of Jesus say, “Do not be afraid; fear not, for I am with you always, even to the end of time.” Let the resurrection resound throughout our community that because Christ lives, we live in the fullness of life also. Let us bring the gift of new life in the form of hope to those who live in despair. Let the resurrection resound that we might bring friendship to the lonely, forgiveness to the penitent, kindness to the mean-spirited, calm to the angry, hospitality to those who feel unworthy of such a gift, fortitude to those whose strength is waning, peace to the hostile, a helping hand to those who feel overwhelmed, acceptance to the disenfranchised, a welcoming smile to those who are strangers in our midst and always, the gift of grace to a world unused to a love which never lets us go. Our joy overflows on this day of new life; may our hallelujahs echo in our hearts as we go forth from this place in the assurance of the presence of a loving God who gave his Son that

we might know what a life of love looks like. With unbridled gratitude, let us pray together in the name of Jesus, the Promised One, the Christ, our risen Lord who is with us now and forever, and who taught us to say when we prayOur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn:

“Hymn of Promise”

Natalie Sleeth

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There’s a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.x

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life eternity,
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

Benediction:

Friends, as this service comes to an end, go forth knowing that the risen Christ goes ahead of you. There is no one you will encounter, no circumstance you will face, no event that will occur that is beyond the redemptive reach of our risen Lord. For Jesus is already there, at work, drawing all the world to himself. In that power, you are called to be messengers of his grace and love. Blessings to each of you this Easter Day. Amen.

Postlude:

“Llanfair”

Thomas Anderson

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