

“This Is Exactly What it Looks Like: The Resurrection”

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

April 12, 2020 (Easter Sunday) – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

Hymns for Worship Video

“The Strife is O’er, the Battle Done” Vs. 4 #257 in the Book of Praise

Lord, from your wounds God’s blessings spring

Free us, we pray, from death's dread sting

That we may live and ever sing

Hallelujah!

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“Christ the Lord is Risen Today” Vs. 3 #247 in the Book of Praise

Soar we now where Christ hath led, following our exalted Head;

Made like him, like him we rise; ours the cross, the grave, the skies

Hail! The Lord of earth and heaven! Praise to thee by both be given;

Every knee to thee shall bow, Risen Christ triumphant now.

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“Jesus Christ is Risen Today” Vs. 1 #243 in the Book of Praise

Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!

Our triumphant, holy day, hallelujah!

Who did once upon the cross, hallelujah!

Suffer to redeem our loss, hallelujah!

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Scripture Texts

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Meditation

This is EXACTLY what it looks like.

On Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem to an exuberant welcome from a crowd that could not contain its joy.

It wasn't what it looked like.

On Thursday he joined his friends for supper during the week of the Passover celebrations.

It wasn't what it looked like.

On Friday he was crucified. He died. He was buried. It looked like the end of the story.

It wasn't what it looked like.

Three days later, the women went to the tomb, his grave.

They expected it to be sealed.

It wasn't.

They expected Jesus to be dead.

He wasn't.

They expected to see his body.

They didn't.

Instead, they saw the stone rolled away.

They saw an angel who said the words we still treasure today: *He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.*

And it was exactly what it looked like.

The tomb WAS empty.

Jesus HAD risen.

This is the day when that for which the people had hoped became real.

Jesus' victory didn't happen the way they thought it would. Their salvation through him wasn't what they thought it would look like. Their expectation of how things would change for the world didn't play out as they had anticipated.

It was better, better than they had imagined.

He is not here. He has risen, just as he said he would.

Jesus had predicted his death, and he died.

Jesus had said he would rise from death, and he did.

The women heard the words of the angel, and they believed.

They saw Jesus, and they worshipped.

Jesus told them to go and tell his disciples he had risen, and they ran with feelings of joy that made the exuberance of last week's crowd fade into the background.

It was true. The story had not ended in death.

It continued with resurrection!

This past week I was sent a picture of a church sign that read, “Don’t worry if this building is empty on Easter morn – so was the tomb.” That just says it all in this time when so many have said they can’t get their heads around not being in church on Easter morning, that this will be the first time in their lives. This is hard for us because we are so used to celebrating with joyful hymns of praise and loud shouts of hallelujah – together.

But don’t worry – no matter whether we are gathered in person or online, the stone is still rolled away, the tomb is still empty, Jesus still lives, and we can still shout loudly – Hallelujah!

Our own church sign is displaying this message: “Be the church wherever you are.” Another one said, “The church isn’t empty: The church has been deployed.” No matter how we say it, there is no taking us out of the church on Easter, or any other day, because by faith in Jesus’ resurrection we ARE the church!

The church is not contained in any building.

The church is a people living a resurrection faith, living in the constant light of Easter morning. We are a people who live because Jesus lives. And like the women who were told to go and tell the others that Jesus lives, we are commissioned to go and tell others the same.

For God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me shall live, even though they die; and no one who lives and believes in me shall ever die.

This is the good news, the heart of the Gospel. It doesn't lose its power because we cannot physically gather. By its power we are connected to Christ and to each other in hope and life, and we can worship and praise and shout hallelujah wherever we are. We can share the awesomeness of the empty tomb and the risen Christ.

We are told repeatedly that the church is not a building, it is a people. This truth becomes more profound when we find ourselves in these days of being physically apart from one another. No matter where we are, every Christian believer is worshipping and celebrating the same story this morning. We are all rejoicing in the good news of the resurrection, and giving thanks for God's power over death. Because so many churches are providing worship online, this good news is going far beyond our buildings and gatherings – it is global!

Our circumstances this year are temporary. The resurrection is timeless. This is our hope, a hope we can share with those who may be feeling hopeless in these days. We can share it with those who are lonely or afraid, those who are ill, those whose hearts are broken because either they cannot be with their loved ones, or

they cannot be comforted in the death of a loved one. The story of the resurrection is not ours to keep, it is ours to give.

And this story is exactly what it looks like.

It is the truth of Christ.

It is the gift of life.

It is the gift of faith and hope.

He is risen! Hallelujah! Amen!