

Saint Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church

Easter Day, April 12, 2020

READINGS:

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4

John 20:1-18

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Alleluia! He is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hesychius of Jerusalem, a monk highly esteemed in Jerusalem as a priest and preacher about 412 A.D., has this, in part, to say in a sermon about our Easter feast:

"The festival we celebrate today, is one of victory - the victory of the son of God, king of the whole universe. On this day the devil is defeated by the crucified one; our race is filled with joy by the risen one. In honor of my resurrection in Christ this day cries out:

'In my journey I beheld a new wonder - an open tomb, a man risen from the dead, bones exulting, souls rejoicing, men and women refashioned, the heavens opened, and powers crying out: Lift up your gates, you princes; be lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the king of glory may come in'....

This day brings a message of joy: it is the day of the Lord's resurrection when, with himself, he raised up the race of Adam. Born for the sake of human beings, he rose from the dead with them.

On this day paradise is opened by the risen one, Adam is restored to life and Eve is consoled.

On this day the divine call is heard, the kingdom is prepared, we are saved and Christ is adored.

On this day, when he had trampled death under foot...Christ ascended into heaven as a king in victory, as a ruler in glory, as an invincible charioteer.

He said to the Father: here am I, O God, with the children you have given me and he heard the Father's reply: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." To him be glory, now and for ever, through endless ages, amen."

"Born for the sake of human beings, he rose from the dead WITH them...Here am I, O God, WITH the children you have given me."

My goodness!

Wow! I would say that Hesychius, as we used to say when I was a little kid in the youth choir, has just "said a mouthful!!"

Jesus, "Emmanuel", "God-With-Us", saying to his Father, HERE I AM, WITH the children you have given me.

Reason to celebrate, indeed!

Hesychius knew what Mary Magdalene, Peter and John did not know that first Easter morning: that Jesus was risen, as he had said, and going ahead of them along the journey of life. John tells us in our Gospel reading for today that "as yet they (the disciples) did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead". The reality of the resurrection was not something they could grasp, then.

But Mary does not go home with Peter and John. She is sure the tomb has been robbed and the body of Jesus stolen, and does not recognize Jesus until he calls her by name. Then, she knows him, and, grief turning to joy, she calls him "Rabbouni".

Wonder of wonders, Jesus has a job for her! Go to my brothers, he says, and tell them "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God". Mary, the first witness to Jesus' resurrection, flies back to the disciples with her astounding message: "I have seen the Lord"! With those words, the world opens to a new future. For, as our triumphal Easter hymn says, "Now the dead IS living, king forevermore!"

Today, on this Easter Day in the year of Our Lord 2020, we also know what Hesychius knew.

We know, as Benedictine nun, author, and speaker Joan Chittister says in her book *In Search of Belief*, that the resurrection of Jesus is not about "resuscitation" of an old life, but about experiencing a new kind of life! She says scripture tells us that after the crucifixion, Jesus

"appeared" in places. "He did not walk through doorways. He did not travel to them as he did from Galilee to Jerusalem. He did not sail to them as he did to Capernaum. He did not ride there by borrowed colt as he did on the way to the Temple. He simply 'appeared' in the midst of their lives, while they were doing mundane things, without warning but vividly, the same but different."

Joan Chittister has "said a mouthful", too! Jesus does that. He simply appears in the midst of our lives, while we are doing mundane things! He is always the same loving Lord, but different!

Episcopal priest, scholar, and author Donald S. Armentrout once described our life with the resurrected Jesus in this way:

"To say that Jesus has risen from the dead means he is not where we left him. He is still with his followers to teach them and help them. Jesus is not the Jesus of our childhood anymore. He has new tasks and challenges for us as adults. Jesus is not even the Jesus we knew yesterday; he will reveal more of his nature and of his power every day of our lives.

The women who came to the tomb on Easter morning discovered that Jesus was no longer there, and that has been the testimony of Christians ever since. As he promised, he is always ahead of us, always bringing us new possibilities and new hopes."

Wow! Donald Armentrout has also "said a mouthful!!!" Jesus is NOT where we left him! He IS always ahead of us, always bringing us new possibilities and new hopes!

Family of Saint Matthew's/San Mateo, the festival we celebrate today IS one of victory - the victory of the son of God, king of the whole universe!

He is always saying to God the Father, "Here am I, with the children you have given me".

He is going ahead of us, revealing more of his nature and of his power every day of our lives.

And, ALL the times of our lives, even this time of COVID-19, ALL of our times are in his hands!

He has a job for US - the same one he gave Mary Magdalen - Go tell all my children everywhere that I am alive! Tell them YOU have seen me!!

Reason to celebrate, indeed!

Alleluia! He is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.