

Sermon: Easter

The Rev. Mike Wernick

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Year C

Isaiah 65:17-25

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Luke 24:1-12

I was baptized on November 4, 1990... I was thirty seven... my two year old daughter... was baptized along with me... during the previous two months... I had had several conversations with Fr. Maurie Kaser... about whether there really was... a place for me... not only in the Episcopal Church... but also in Christendom... me... who had grown up Jewish... me... doubted some things I'd heard about Christian theology... me... who still needed to be formed...

And Fr. Kaser affirmed over and over again... that there was... and so on that All Saints' Sunday in 1990... I chose to make a public proclamation of faith... and become a part of something that was far greater than I was... and I experienced something unexpected... and almost magical... as the living water ran down my forehead... and fell back into the baptismal font... I experienced a deep and palpable peace... like nothing which I could have imagined... and which lasted all that afternoon and evening... I came out as Christian... and found new life...

Mary Magdalene... Joanna... James' mother Mary... and other women... came to the tomb... expecting to find death... but Jesus was not there... two angels in dazzling clothes asked them... in what must have been the most loving way... why they were looking for the living among the dead... remember... in Matthew 8:22... Jesus said... *let the dead bury their own dead*... remember... in John 10: Jesus said... *no one takes my life from me... I have power to lay it down... and I have power to take it up again*... remember... our reading just now from 1 Corinthians challenges us... *if our hope in Christ... is for this life only... then we are to be pitied*...

Mennonite minister April Yamasaki wrote... the Good News... is old news... but we need to be reminded of it... in Luke 9:18-22... Jesus asks his disciples... "Who do you say that I am?" When Peter answers... "the Messiah of God," Jesus tells them of his coming suffering... death... and resurrection... in vv. 37-45... after healing a child and returning him to his father... Jesus again predicts that he will be betrayed and executed... later... in 18:31-45... Jesus gives his disciples a more detailed account of what's to come... Peter and the other disciples hear all three of Jesus' predictions... yet by the time the women tell them about the empty tomb... they have apparently forgotten... they don't believe the women's testimony that Jesus has risen from the dead...

In fact... in our translation... the men regard what the women say... as an idle tale... in the Greek... the word tale... *lay-ras*... is also translated as twaddle... hooley... nonsense... I can almost hear them mansplaining to the women... that what they think they saw... couldn't possibly be... what they actually saw...

But still... Peter is intrigued... he may not remember Jesus' words... grief may have overshadowed them... in much the same way that grief may have tricked Mary into thinking that Jesus was the gardener... but there's something which resonated in Peter... and so he ran to the tomb... and looked in... and saw the linen cloths lying there by themselves... and was amazed...

The death of death is amazing... it boggles our minds... but only because it goes against the din of all the collective secular voices we hear... particularly in American culture... so much so... that we too need to be reminded that God calls us out of our tombs...

The fire and destruction at Notre Dame on Monday... bring to mind the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem... it's like the destruction of Home Tree in the movie Avatar... it horrifies us... and raises issues we'd rather not consider... like issues of

impermanence... these edifices took... perhaps... hundreds of years to build... and have stood in silent witness to Mystery... for 800 years or more... and the destruction raises issues of our own... human... mortality... in some ways... we want to believe that they and we... will outlast time... Matthew... Mark... and Luke though... remind us... that heaven and earth... and cathedrals... will pass away... but God's Word will not... and we are certainly a part of God's Word...

We get fleeting glimpses of this truth in Ps. 118:5... *I called out to God from my narrowness... and God answered me with a vast expanse...* in 1 Corinthians 13... *for we know only in part... we see in a mirror dimly... but when the complete comes... the partial will come to an end...*

I don't know where I was... before I came to be here... we joke about how before we were born... we were just a twinkle in our parent's eyes... but perhaps before we were born... we were a spotlight in God's eyes... because I am confident... as 1 Corinthians 15:54 reminds us... *that our perishable body will put on imperishability...* I am confident... as 2 Corinthians 5:2 reminds us... that we groan in this earthly tent because we long to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling... and I am confident... as 2 Corinthians 5:1 reminds us... *that what is mortal will be swallowed... up... by... life...* what is limited will be will be swallowed up by limitlessness... and if that's true... then the life we have now... doesn't hold a candle to the lives we will have later...

In a recent article... Episcopal priest Steve Paulikas... wrote... *It was my church... that ultimately coaxed me out into the fullness of the person God created me to be... this was not an act of accommodation on the part of the church... but the fulfillment of its ancient mission... of liberating souls from spiritual bondage...*

Friday night was the first night of Passover... the commemoration of the Exodus... the release of the Jewish people from 400 years of Egyptian slavery... but the freedom they experienced is our *anamnesis*... that means that it didn't just happen to them then... it's

happening to us now... we are called to freedom from anything and everything that enslaves us... that restrains us... that addicts us... that keeps us from experiencing the boundlessness for which we were created... from anything that kills us...

So on this Easter Sunday... as we are reminded of the living water... and grace... in which we swim... as we are reminded of God's call to freedom... from everything that binds us... remember too... that we are invited to be further transformed by God's promise of forgiveness... and resurrection... and eternal life... which transcends human time...

I've said before... that Jesus turned resurrection from a historical event... into an eternal state of being... that's available to us in each and every moment... for a healed and new life... resurrection is about more than life after death... it is about a new kind of life here and now... and about a new way of seeing the world and God... and as Richard Rohr wrote... the seeds of Easter are already found in Christmas... *if God can become flesh... incarnating in the material world... then resurrection is a natural conclusion... nothing divine can die...* and all of us have that divine spark within us... today... we are called to an eternal life which is more glorious than we can even imagine... and for that we say Amen... [pause]... and Alleluia...

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