

The Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord

April 4, 2021

Living Faith Lutheran Church, Sechelt, BC

Preservice Music/Welcome/Announcements

GATHERING

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia!** (*Repeat 3 times*)

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ, for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.

We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,
like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls,
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear.

Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.

Send us companions on our journey as we share your life.

Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life.

To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn **#365 "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" v. 3 – piano only**

- 1 Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia! our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
who did once upon the cross, Alleluia! suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!
- 2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia! unto Christ, our heavenly king, Alleluia!
who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia! sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!
- 3 **Piano only**
But the pains which he endured, Alleluia! our salvation have procured; Alleluia!
now above the sky he's king, Alleluia! where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!
- 4 Sing we to our God above, Alleluia! praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!
praise him, all you heavenly host, Alleluia! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all. **And also with you.**

Hymn of Praise (*spoken*) "This is the Feast"

Refrain: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia!

**1. Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.
Power and riches and wisdom and strength
and honour and blessing and glory are his. *Refrain.***

**2. Sing with all the people of God and join in the hymn of all creation:
Blessing and honor and glory and might
be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. *Refrain.***

Prayer of the Day

O Ancient of Days, **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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

First Reading Acts 10:34-43

³⁴Then Peter began to speak to them: "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."

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading I Corinthians 15:1-11

¹Now I would remind you, sisters and brothers, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ²through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you — unless you have come to believe in vain. ³For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them — though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation *Please rise in body or spirit*

Alleluia, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Holy Gospel

John 20:1-18

Glory to you, O Lord

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.

The good news of our Lord. ***Praise to you, O Christ***

Sermon

Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021

John 20:1-18

The Sunday of the Feast of our Lord's Resurrection

is the greatest and holiest day in the whole church year.

It also happens to be the only one set by phases of the moon.

Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon
after the vernal or spring equinox.

And tying it to the equinox makes good and ancient sense
since it coincides with the greening of earth:
Christ is risen and whole world comes to life.

Sap in dormant trees begins to flow; spring flowers bloom;
cherry trees and fruit trees blossom;
trumpet lilies spill their sweet scent on the air.
The connection between Easter and spring is a happy one
and renews our faith in the creative power of God

But it is also a misleading connection because spring is natural.
The daffodil bulb looks like nothing more than an onion
with thin skin and scraggly roots. . .but all you have to do
is stick it in the ground in the autumn and then wait.
Come spring, it escapes the earth and explodes with colour. . .
like some kind of yellow butterfly finally out of its cocoon.

It seems almost miraculous, but it is actually completely natural. . .
whereas resurrection is entirely unnatural.

Plant a human being into the ground. . .and that is that!
You don't wait around for a dead person to reappear
so you can pick up the threads of where you left off.

Instead, what you do. . .is to say goodbye, pay your respects, and then go
home—go back home to try and get on with life
as best as you can knowing that the only place springtime happens
in cemeteries is **on** graves. . .and not **in** them.

And that is all Mary is doing that morning: Paying her respects
by going to the tomb to convince herself that it is all true--
that the whole horrible experience actually happened
and isn't just a nightmare.

It is still dark, but even from a distance, she can tell something is wrong.
The stone is moved. . .and, as she came closer,
she could see that the grave was empty. . .and an empty grave,
regardless of where or when, is always a horror.
His body is all she has left and now it is gone. What to do now?

Well, what she does is run away—and, ironically, she runs away
from the very place of Jesus' victory over death.
She runs away and brings two other friends back with her who,
when satisfied that what she said was true, leave her alone and weeping.

Like an abandoned puppy who has lost her master,
she stays rooted to last place he had been
without least idea of what to do next.

And it doesn't help much even when she works up her nerve
to look inside and sees and speaks with angels.

Indeed, her confusion that has come with grief is compounded
by the shock she experiences in the seeing of the angels. . .
and, as we might say today, she just goes on "autopilot". . .
just acts and speaks without much thought.

As a result, when she turns around and bumps into the gardener—
whose only value is that he might know the answer to her question,
she says to him: "Tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away."
I mean, what does she expect to do? Pick up the body by herself?
Have him help her by laying the corpse on her shoulders so she can take it home?

It's not a reasonable request but the gardener doesn't seem to mind.
He simply smiles and says, "Mary". He simply speaks her name: "Mary"--
and breathlessly she responds, "Rabbouni". . .my teacher."
In Hebrew, "Rabbi" means "Teacher" and "Rabbouni" means "MY Teacher."

And what does her Teacher do or say in response?
Well, what he says is almost heartless and brusque:
"Don't hold on to me!"—even though we have no indication she is doing that. . .
although I'm sure she instinctively reached out to touch him.

On the other hand, perhaps what he is referring to
when he says "Don't hold on to me" is because of what she calls him:
"Rabbouni". . .because that is his old name--the name she used to call him.
And maybe. . .probably. . .surely. . . he can hear in her voice
that she wants him back. . .wants to go back. . .
back to her old life with him
where everything is familiar and not frightening like now.

Barbara Brown Taylor says that "Rabbouni" was his Friday name
but this is Sunday. . .a new day in an entirely new life
in an entirely new world. Nothing will ever be the same for her again.

Maybe that's why angels who encounter people
always say right off the top "Don't be afraid"--
not only because heavenly beings showing up
can be frightening on their own
but because a new life is frightening and unnatural.
We expect a sealed tomb and find one filled with angels.
We seek a corpse and find a risen Lord.
None of that is expected and none of that is natural.

2000 years ago, the stone was rolled away to reveal highly unnatural truth—
that God has planted within us a seed of life that cannot be killed.
And if and when we remember that, then there is nothing we cannot do:
move mountains; banish fear; love enemies; change the world.

Because Jesus is risen, anything and everything is possible. . .except. . .
except this one thing: To hold on to him—
to try and keep him the way we want him to be—
to slot him into our present lives and fit him neatly
into our old ways of being and doing.
But, that, he says, “ain’t gonna happen!”

“Don’t cling to me.” He is saying that to us this morning.
Don’t cling to the old life. . .to the way things used to be. . .
even to the way things were slightly more than a year ago now.
Don’t hold on to what happened yesterday. . .
to those painful feelings and memories that imprison you. . .us.
Instead, let go of the past and be made new.

Now, I’m pretty sure that most of you already know this,
but I’m going tell it to you anyway:
It is a really difficult thing to let go of the past--
because the grip that past hurts and wounds have over us is very strong.
And yet, unless those past hurts and wounds are let go
and put to death, we can never find and live a new life.

Recently I came across a peculiar phrase: “The Unconscious has no digestive tract.”
The author of that phrase explains that what it means
is that painful events or memories of the past
won’t and don’t just pass through us or go away on their own.

Instead they must be faced, mourned,
and then intentionally and consciously let go
before we can be free to move on. . .and to be made new.

So, let me suggest today that what Jesus is saying to Mary, and to us,
in this morning’s text is this: Face up to the pain in your past.
Look it square in the eye--whether it is anger over abuse;
bitterness over a divorce; guilt or shame over a dreadful deed;
the loneliness that comes from a loveless family
or a frozen spouse or an unforgiving parent;
the hurt caused by a thoughtless pastor. . .or congregation;
the joy stolen from you by death of a lover or your dearest friend.

Face up to that pain, heartache and heartbreak. Confront it. . .
and mourn all that you have lost. . .or never had the chance to have:
Whether innocence or youth, health or happiness,
marriage or childlessness, a trusted lifelong companion.
Mourn your losses for all you are worth. . .
and then, let them all go. . .let it all die. . .
because if we don’t let it die, Easter can never come.

For, you see, Easter always starts with death
and resurrection necessarily begins at the grave. . .

which means it is only when we put our old hurts and wounds to death
that we can finally be free. . .and finally be alive.

Now, I didn't just fall off the turnip truck this morning
and so I know full well that what I am telling you
about facing the past and mourning our losses
and about letting them go and moving on—
I know how that sounds. . .that it sounds difficult for some;
frightening for others; impossible for a few; and trite or naïve for many.

But I'm here to assure you that after watching countless people
throughout my ministry. . .including you. . .
after watching them. . .and you. . .come forward to the table. . .to the meal. . .
time after time after time. . .with their hands. . .your hands. . .
stretched out in hope and trust--

the trust which comes from admitting to yourself and to God
that there is brokenness, sorrow and pain in your life,
whether now or in the past. . .and that you want and need healing. . .
that you want and need relief and release from it.

And after my experiencing and witnessing that yearning for new life,
I am more convinced than ever that Jesus is right in telling Mary—
and through her, in telling us—that we can spend our lives
angry over what we have lost, bitter over what might have been,
longing for what never will be again. . .
but the result of that is that we can and will
spend our days and years living in the past. . .
which, for all intents and purposes, is the same as being dead,
since the dead are pure past. . .only alive in the past.

Or we can open our hands and hearts and let go of all those demons—
all those fears and worries, those hurts and wounds,
those resentments and that anger—
all of which are devouring us from the inside out. . .
and, in that act of letting them go, we can and will be set free. . .
can and will be made alive again.

So, having listened to this story. . .and hearing Jesus' words to Mary,
let me ask you: What do you want to do? What are you going to do?
Will you keep on trying to hold on to the old. . .to yesterday?
Or will you let this risen One take you with him
into the new. . .into tomorrow?
Naturally, it is your decision. . .naturally.

But always remember this: In the future, everything and anything is possible. . .
because Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed.

And let all of God's people say "Hallelujah!" and "Amen." SDG

Hymn of the Day #377 **"Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen"** (v. 3 - piano only; refrain - all)

1 Alleluia! Jesus is risen! Trumpets resounding in glorious light!
Splendor, the Lamb, heaven forever! Oh, what a miracle God has in sight!

Refrain - Jesus is risen and we shall arise. Give God the glory! Alleluia!

2 Walking the way, Christ in the center telling the story to open our eyes;
breaking our bread, giving us glory: Jesus our blessing, our constant surprise.

Refrain - Jesus is risen and we shall arise. Give God the glory! Alleluia!

3 **Verse: Piano only; refrain – all**

Jesus the vine, we are the branches; life in the Spirit the fruit of the tree;
heaven to earth, Christ to the people, gift of the future now flowing to me. *Refrain*

4 Weeping, be gone; sorrow, be silent: death put asunder, and Easter is bright.
Cherubim sing: O grave, be open! Clothe us in wonder, adorn us in light.

5 City of God, Easter forever, golden Jerusalem, Jesus the Lamb,
river of life, saints and archangels, sing with creation to God the I AM! *Refrain*

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love. *A brief silence.*

Praise to you for your power revealed in the resurrection! Fill your church with the power of your love that is stronger than death. Send us to tell the good news wherever death holds sway. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for your life at work in the resurrection! Fill all of creation with your life. Bring it to blossom and flourish; use it to remind us of your persistent grace. Cultivate our care for what you have made. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for the peace made possible in the resurrection! Fill the nations with your peace. Draw together people of all nations and languages; reveal new possibilities and inspire new beginnings. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for the hope of the resurrection! Fill all in need with hope: those who are afraid or confused, those who are sick or suffering, those who are depressed or discouraged, disheartened or disappointed; those who are dying, and those who grieve (*especially those in our parish and those in our hearts and minds whose names we speak now in silence or aloud. . .*). Assure them of your promises and of our presence with them in their troubles. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for the joy of your resurrection! Fill this assembly with joy as we remember and celebrate that we are called your beloved in baptism. Multiply that joy so that we share it at home, at work, and in our community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for your faithfulness revealed in the resurrection! Fill us with trust, that we join with *Benedict the African martyr* and all who have gone before us in proclaiming: “your mercy endures forever!” Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the sure hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our risen and reigning Lord. **Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace and Offertory

MEAL

Offertory Prayer

God of love, **you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table. Receive our lives and the gifts we offer. Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world; for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Great Thanksgiving

God is with you. **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to our God.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin; who in dying has destroyed death, and in rising has brought us to eternal life.

And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Eucharistic Prayer for Easter over the Gifts of the Earth

Holy, living, and loving God, we praise you for creating the heavens and the earth.

We bless you for bringing Noah and his family through the waters of the flood,
for freeing your people Israel from the bonds of slavery,
and for sending your Son to be our Redeemer.

We give you thanks for Jesus who, living among us, healed the sick, fed the hungry,
and with a love stronger than death, gave his life for others.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people
for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life-giving death and glorious resurrection,
we await your promised life for all this dying world.

Breathe your Spirit on us and on this bread and cup: carry us in your arms from death to life,
that we may live as your chosen ones, clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Through him all glory and honour is yours, Eternal One, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church, both now and forever. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer *(to be sung to the usual melody)*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Fraction (*Breaking of the bread*)

The gifts of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Invitation to Communion

The risen Christ invites us to this table. Come, eat and be satisfied. **Hallelujah!**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Distribution of the feast of gladness while a musical reflection is played

Prayer after Communion

Let us pray. Wellspring of joy, **through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts.**

Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses that your love

may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SENDING

Benediction

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn **#376 "Thine is the Glory"**

1 Thine is the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won!
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

Refrain

Thine is the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son; endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won!

2 Lo, Jesus meets thee, risen from the tomb!
Lovingly he greets thee, scatters fear and gloom;
let his church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting! *Refrain*

3 No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conqu'rors, through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above. *Refrain*

Dismissal Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**
You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.
Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

Postlude