

Pastor Roy's Sermon from Easter Sunday - April 20, 2014

He is Risen! . . .

Easter, 2014

Angels reveal to the two Mary's, "Do not be afraid. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said." Then Jesus greets them along the way and tells them to pass the word along to his brothers. He is alive. Death is defeated. No longer to be feared. His ministry will continue. . . now through them. God's justice and mercy and reign of love will go on. . . forever. The Spirit of Jesus will guide them every step of the way.

In Acts we see the Resurrection through the eyes of the apostles and early followers of Jesus. They proclaim that Jesus is the One toward whom the prophets, who specialized in judgment and perception, looked as the judge of the living and the dead. Solid forgiveness is granted by this impartial, gracious Judge who in life had done much good and healed many. Though violence, greed, and insider politics seemed to win the day in his execution, God's vindication of Jesus and his ministry is revealed in his resurrection from the dead. This judgment of blessing reveals him as the spokesman for mercy, the true Judge.

Resurrection is not just something we believe about Jesus. It's about us too. It's personal—his resurrection is our resurrection. His life is our life. It makes a difference, not just a religious belief trinket we add to our collection of coping mechanisms. This is our understanding of life and death.

Also, resurrection is more than just proof of Jesus' credentials. Resurrection is Jesus' character. Resurrection is the final judgment of mercy in creation. We are not born to die. Jesus was not born to die. We are born in life, to live. And when we, like Jesus do eventually die, our life, too, will go on.

Because he is alive in the world today, so will our life go on. Death cannot threaten to undo us. Death is not the final bummer in a long line of trouble, pain, and confusion. Death appears to be the end, but it is always swallowed up in the enduring life of God which awaits us on the other side of loss and uncertainty. Yes, death leaves behind great pain—loss, separation, loneliness. Death tempts us to despair. We need each other for support as we await resurrection's final word of life. This is the longing of Hope. This is the seemingly eternal wait of our lives. But we have hope as we see the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as it spreads to all the saints and all of creation.

Our faith in Resurrection tells us that life will always go on. It cannot be stopped by something that happens to me or you. This is what the writer in Colossians writes, "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory."

Jesus Christ upholds life, he is our touchable assurance of the endurance of life for us as Christians. We see the life of Christ in our sisters and brothers. We see the ongoing work of Christ in creation and we have courage to keep seeking the things above. Keep seeking the justice of God for all. Keep seeking Love. Keep seeking mercy. Keep seeking God's judgment of life which is grace.

In Christ, we are dead to death. We can let go of fear. We can choose life. We can choose love.

It's not and never will be easy. But if we keep our faith in God's judgment of mercy, our priorities shift. We find ourselves with the apostle seeking these things that are above the fray of fear. We find the courage to walk away from all the appearances which give fear and death its power over us.

Let us pray to see resurrection all around us. Let us pray to see the Spirit drawing us into life and hope and peace. Let us pray in our confusion, in our grief, in our despair. We will always, eventually, find God, in prayer. We meet Jesus in prayer. The Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit of life. The Spirit of Resurrection. The Spirit of Grace. These are the glorious mysteries in which we live our faith, our life.

Thanks be to God. Amen.