

Pastor Roy's sermon from Easter (March 31, 2013)

Luke 24:1-12

He is Risen! [He is risen indeed!]

What does "He is risen!" mean to you?

Hope? Renewal echoed in the rebirth of creation in spring? The defeat of the fear of Death? The most horrible experience transformed into a life-giving possibility?

Resurrection! A life threatened by despair replaced by a life of hope. The Creator bringing full life to all of creation. Jesus' resurrection is a sign that life is reborn from death into hope. The event we celebrate today was for Christ and his friends a onetime event. It is the rebirth of life which cannot be extinguished. It is life secure in the mercies of God. Even the most distressing turn of events—the appearance of defeat--becomes seed for new hope and life. An opportunity for hope to be reborn in love. Death and life united in hope.

The challenge is that it takes faith to find the connection between life and death and that despite appearances otherwise, they are not mutually exclusive. The days and long nights of grief for Jesus' friends upon his death were unimaginably difficult for them. So are ours. Healing and hope came as they began to realize that Jesus' death was not the end but a new beginning. He was alive in a new way—just as alive as when he walked, and ate, and breathed, and slept. Now there is a mystery, but a true one, indeed!

His death and resurrection baffled all of his friends. It seemed everyone had a slightly different take on what had and what was happening. Isn't that still the case today?

Nonetheless, resurrection becomes central for the early church and is today. The church is the living body of Christ today. The Spirit of Christ lives on in us and through us.

"He is risen" means-- "We are free!" Free to live, free to love, free to serve, free to overcome sin, evil, and injustice. Totally free. We need not fear failure or incompetence as we act out this gift of freedom because death and "not enough" or "not good enough" have been obliterated by Christ's rising! This doesn't mean we won't struggle, but it means we can overcome by the mercy of God and with the support of God's people. Resurrection means we have to rethink our judgments and purpose for living.

We jump into the stream of God's mercy and it will flow where it will flow! We need no longer control outcomes. We are called to simply make our best attempt at loving, serving, befriending those around us and all of God's creation which has been redeemed with resurrection newness. Death has been undone. But we must be mindful of these things as we live or we will be sucked back into the old misperceptions of success and failure, of fearfully controlling our options so that things will turn out well for us and our loved ones.

The resurrected Lord is drawing all of creation unto himself even as he gave himself on behalf of all.

When the life giving, resurrection grace of God flows through us by the gift of the Spirit, we are truly alive, even as Christ arose. He is alive and so are we, if we receive the life which God freely gives to

those who find grace and live in its eternal light.

For the next 7 weeks of Easter, I challenge you--long after the eggs and bunnies are forgotten—to search for and be aware of the Spirit of Christ's resurrection at work in our world. In creation. In the church. In your family. At work. In the community. It's not always obvious, but the Spirit of Christ is at work all around us.

Christ is alive. Hope has overcome when we wait with the longsuffering patience of Christ.

May we be filled with the joy of new life and peace in our risen Lord Jesus Christ who has conquered death, hell, fear, hatred, and injustice. The challenge of seeing and accepting Christ's resurrection is as great for us as it was for his friends. The more mindful we are of his resurrection acting in the world today, the more joy we will know. Mindfulness of resurrection is a discipline, I challenge you to practice it!

The Lord is Risen! [The Lord is risen indeed!]