

Pastor Roy's Sermon from May 1, 2016

Christ is Risen. [He is risen, indeed! Alleluia] What does it mean today, for us, that Christ is risen—that he is risen indeed? What is the hope of our faith?

When I think of the resurrection, our risen Lord, and the season of Easter, I think of Jesus walking around having conversations with his disciples after he was raised. Yet the readings during the Easter season don't emphasize Jesus' appearances. They emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the new church.

Today, Paul has a vision of a man calling for him to come to Northern Greece to share the good news. He and his friends go. There they meet Lydia and others who choose to be baptized. Lydia invites them to stay with her household and the church of the Philippians is born. What would have happened if Paul and Luke and the others had ignored the call to Macedonia? What if Lydia had ignored their message? What if she would not have invited them to stay long enough to establish a congregation in Philippi? It's a good reminder that the Church of Jesus Christ depends on many people serving in many ways.

So Easter isn't as much about wonders and miracles, Easter is about living into a relationship with God in the Holy Spirit. *It's about listening to God as we pray in the nitty gritty of our lives so that we may follow the Spirit.* But what's the Spirit got to do with Jesus? It wasn't long before the early church learned that the Spirit *is* Jesus communing with us. Not in an "extra-ordinary" experience as we sometimes think, but in the common. The Spirit always leads, always guides. We cannot chase the Spirit away. **We** cannot lose the *Spirit because* the *Spirit* is always choosing **us** to live into our baptismal promises, to live into our walk with the Risen Lord. Resurrection is not our responsibility. God is the One who raises, who brings new opportunity, new life. God is the main actor. We observe with joy.

So when we think about our neighbor, the Spirit is inviting us to make time to get to know and relate to our neighbor. When we think about our relationship with spouse or friend, the Spirit is calling us to set aside time to listen to and to honor those to whom we have committed ourselves. When we think about commitments to this congregation, the Spirit is calling us to love, to honor, to care. The Spirit invites us to serve our community and our world.

Advertising is always beckoning us and telling us to make ourselves happy by getting the right stuff. Politicians remind us that we should be afraid so *they* can tell *us* how *they* will make *us* more secure. But our risen Lord reminds us that love and compassion bring the true life worth living. We receive as much as we give. We love and serve our way into the web of relationships all around us. As we serve in love, our deepest needs are met even as we help others meet theirs.

In John's gospel this morning, we hear Jesus saying he is going away but that the Spirit is coming. . .and has come. Jesus' comes to us today by the Spirit. We are sent as the hands and feet of Jesus into the world, like Paul, and Luke, and Lydia. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." Peace.

Jesus returns to God. Jesus lived and died a life of constant returning to God. We can do the same. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not let them be afraid.

Be of good courage. . . Thanks be to God. Amen.