

“Live the Resurrection”
Easter Sunday, Year C, April 17, 2022
Acts 10:34-43 Luke 24:1-12
First Presbyterian Church of Sandpoint, Idaho
Pastor Andy Kennaly

Last week we called the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem “Palm Sunday” even though Luke’s gospel makes no mention of palm branches.

“Cloak Sunday” doesn’t have the same appeal, although that’s what the people laid on the road in front of Jesus riding a colt. Multiple details vary, depending on which gospel you read, Mathew, Mark, Luke, or John.

Easter Sunday is not much different. We wonder if it was one Mary or three women who went to the tomb early in the morning. Was it dark or light, were there two men in white clothing, or one angel? Did the Risen Christ appear and speak, or not? Was there a body in the tomb, as Jesus the man died but Christ the second person of the Trinity arose, or was the body not there and the grave clothes lay empty?

Again, each gospel varies on the details. The mechanics of how that first Easter happened don’t match up, even within the same Gospel. Luke, for example, mentions other manuscripts that either add or subtract verses from what we read. This morning we read from the [New Revised Standard](#)

[Version](#), an English translation of the Bible published in 1989 by the National Council of Churches in an effort to adhere to the earliest reliable biblical manuscripts and use updated, gender inclusive language whenever possible. A global committee of scholars had to decide what to put in and what to leave out, and they had criteria to guide them. They made lots of footnotes along the way. Those footnotes mention things like, “other ancient authorities add, or read,” and they give you a listing of what those additions or ways to phrase things are. Some ancient authorities lack the words printed in this translation, such as when the “two men in dazzling clothes stood beside” the women and said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead. He is not here, but has risen.” That last part, “he is not here but has risen” is not always printed in some of those old, reliable, ancient manuscripts. “Why do you look for the living among the dead” is as far as it goes, which sets up the possibility that Jesus’ body is still in the tomb, even as Christ arose. Same with verse 12 and Peter running to the tomb after the women reported what had happened. This part, with him running, is not always there. It almost ends with the disciples not believing the women, just calling it “an idle tale.” But somewhere, someone added the part about Peter going to the tomb and seeing the linen

cloths by themselves, which would imply the body of Jesus is not there, but has risen.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” is an accurate question for us because when our loved ones die, they are dead and their body is gone, either buried or cremated, and we never see them again like we once did. The dead are dead, just like Jesus died and the blood and water that flowed out were proof that his body no longer had life in it. But something on that Easter morning went beyond logistics, didn’t get hung up on mechanics of how things work, and isn’t limited to historical accuracy in a linear time, cause-and-effect way.

Easter Sunday has less to do with chronology and sequence and detail than it does with quality and Kairos, an opportune time for a critical action. Easter is about life that death cannot overcome or understand, life that is relentlessly eternal with qualities of trust, presence, and love. These never die because they are held in Divine glory, which is; always ongoing, centered in the Living Christ, and shall always be.

The Bible is filled with metaphor, and even mythical stories carry the weight of truth. The Resurrection on Easter morning is not dependent on

details because, in their own way, these various reports all point to the same thing: something happened, something amazing, transformational, and life is defined by these deep truths, even when it seems like it's not.

It shouldn't surprise us that different people focus on one aspect or another in living out the truths of biblical story. Even something as obvious as a cross. Roman Catholics having a crucifix, a cross with the body of Jesus on it, compared with Protestants who feature the cross as empty. Or at communion when Roman Catholics come to the altar and in a sense re-sacrifice Jesus for their sins, while Protestants like Presbyterians come to a table rather than an altar. Presbyterians don't have an altar because altars are where sacrifices are made, and Jesus died, once for all, no need to re-sacrifice. But there is a need, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, to claim a greater unity, to gather in Christ's name, and share joy as we respond to God's call toward community and unity and embodiment as Christ fills the Church and sends us into the world.

What we are sent for gets us back to Easter joy. There is a wide variety of gifts and calling, ways to serve as broad and colorful as the tapestry of life itself expressed in societies and cultures. If the biblical accounts of Easter

morning, probably the most important anchor point of Christian faith, cannot reconcile a basic storyline, then why should we assume that living out Christian faith in the larger Church is a mono-culture defined by the Television evangelist or radio preacher? As important as doctrinal distinctions may seem, we're continually pulled toward freedom from the tyranny of perspectives and siloed thinking.

Happy Easter (bunny)! Easter bunnies? Prolific reproductive rabbits delivering eggs and (thankfully) chocolate? This is Easter in America. Even churches promote Easter egg hunts. So many cultures have dedicated fertility gods, and our culture combines these ancient stories into a conglomeration of Easter egg hunts, bunnies, and church, and in the northern hemisphere this merges with rites of spring and equinox and, again, Easter details get muddled and confusing, and we wonder what is Easter really about?

That story from Acts chapter 10 is a reconciliation story of Peter and Cornelius. This entire story should not have happened. Peter is a Jewish follower of Jesus the Christ, and Cornelius is a Gentile. They should not have come together and there were laws encoded to promote boundaries and maintain distinctions. But as the Church, Christian love overcomes these

lesser concerns. Both Peter and Cornelius had to open their hearts and lives to the expansive love of God revealed in new ways through the action and activity of the Spirit among them. They experienced and embodied the divine vision of unity held by grace.

This is an invitation to us. In our confusing world, how do we live the Resurrection? Do we worry about biblical details and argue about doctrines, dogmas, and biblical inerrancy or other faith matters that can even sound to us like the voice of God? How do we not get hung up in the details, but trust the deeper tones of truth through the stories of myth that have power to shape our realities? How do we live the Resurrection when we so often are like those women who look for the living among the dead? Are we willing to come alongside Peter as “those who were chosen by God as witnesses?”

The very next verse, just beyond what we read from Acts, is amazing. Peter is speaking, telling the story of Easter, and in verse 44, “While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.” In some ways, Peter gets interrupted, yet in other ways this shows the partnership of co-creating with God, of putting Resurrection faith in action in ways that sets the foundation for God’s activity to unfold as the Spirit’s

creative power is revealed. That's quite a calling! For Peter, Cornelius, and us!

Where do you look for the living Christ? How is Easter revealed in your life, and how does your life reveal Easter? What is it that inspires you and where does God's Word reveal peace in your heart? As God's light illuminates and provides direction, may you remain open to the desire to turn and follow the One that guides our feet. May God direct, inspire, and guide us as we live into Resurrection hope and share with the world as we're called by the Spirit. As we live as Easter people, may God be glorified, now, even as forever. Amen.