

The Resurrection of Our Lord/Easter Day, Year C

April 4, 2010

Acts 10: 34-43; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15: 19-26; Luke 24: 1-12

Acts 10:34-42

{34} Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, *{35}* but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. *{36}* You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. *{37}* That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: *{38}* how 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. *{39}* We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; *{40}* but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, *{41}* not 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. *{42}* He 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.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

{1} O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! *{2}* Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever" □ *{14}* The LORD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. *{15}* There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly; *{16}* the right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly." *{17}* I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. *{18}* The LORD has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death. *{19}* Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. *{20}* This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. *{21}* I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. *{22}* The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. *{23}* This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. *{24}* This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

{19} If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. *{20}* But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. *{21}* For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; *{22}* for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. *{23}* But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. *{24}* Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. *{25}* For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. *{26}* The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Luke 24:1-12

{1} But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. *{2}* They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, *{3}* but when they went in, they did not find the body. *{4}* While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. *{5}* The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. *{6}* Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, *{7}* that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." *{8}* Then they remembered his words, *{9}* and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. *{10}* Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. *{11}* But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. *{12}* But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Many of you have heard this story before, in fact, I've probably used it in a previous sermon (or two).

A man was unexpectedly caught in a terrible flood that swept him, along with his house and belongings, away. He was hanging on to some floating debris for dear life. As any of us would, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" A little while later someone came along on a makeshift raft that was strong enough to float and would have supported the weight of another. "Come on!" cried the woman, but the man refused. "No thanks, God will save me.", he said. He was becoming increasingly weaker as he floated along but was still convinced that God was going to save him. All of a sudden a rescue boat came along and threw out a life preserver. Once again, the man refused, saying, "God will save me." And he waved them off. So, he floated along, growing weaker and weaker. Finally, a rescue helicopter crew spotted him and sent down a lifeline to pull him to safety. Incredibly, the man refused and said, "That's okay, I know God is going to save me!"

Well, eventually the poor man grew too weak to struggle and drowned. When he got to heaven the first thing he asked God was, "Why didn't you save me?" God replied, "Of course I tried to save you! Who do you think sent the raft, the rescue boat, and the helicopter?"

What does that have to do with Easter?

I love Easter and believe in the resurrection of Jesus with all my heart and soul, but I have to admit that I'm still left with some questions. It's not always easy to see the risen Jesus or know He is around.

For the most part, the Gospel stories about the resurrection are pretty subtle, short on the "juicy" details about "how" it happened, and actually make up a very small portion of the narratives. Like most of God's mighty deeds in the Bible, there are many ways to interpret it.

"But why?", I ask. Why didn't the risen Jesus appear in the Temple to the thousands of pilgrims gathered for Passover? Why not to the priests? Why not to Caesar? Why was He just so darn elusive? Why not appear here? Why can't I see? Why not make it simple?

Gratefully, the Bible actually has answers for those sorts of questions. The resurrected Jesus was around. In the next few weeks we'll be hearing some of the stories. To Mary Magdalene, He looked like a gardener. To the two disgusted and disappointed disciples heading out of town to escape to Emmaus, He looked like a stranger with whom they shared part of the journey and to whom they offered hospitality. To the disciples who had

returned to their “day jobs”, He looked like a stranger preparing breakfast for them after a long night of work. For St. Paul, He looked like a “rag tag” worshipping and witnessing community. Remember when St. Paul was knocked off his high horse and heard a voice? When he asked who it was, the response was, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” The resurrected Jesus identified Himself with the communities that St. Paul was persecuting!

The risen Jesus met them along the way: in their confusion, disappointments, doubts, failings, weakness, shame, fear, and grief. He met them when they were running in the opposite direction and even when they hated Him.

He meets us along the way as well, though we generally don’t recognize him at first.

When, God willing, many, many years from now, I finally get to personally ask Jesus my questions, here’s what I’m guessing He will say: “I was always around. I showed up at King of Kings all the time, not only when you broke bread and shared the cup, not only in the words of the Bible, and certainly not always through the sermons; more often than not, I looked like Joshua Mahaney, or Marty Kope, or Steve and Candy McNutt, or Collin Johnson, or Derek Huffman, or Mary Huffman.”

“I looked like your parents, your brothers, your relatives, your seminary professors, your classmates, your work colleagues, and the people you worked with.”

So, don’t stay the empty tomb trying to figure it all out or wallowing in grief and sorrow. Hit the road. The risen Jesus is out there waiting to meet you when you least expect and least deserve it.

On a quiet morning about two thousand years ago, in a little and insignificant corner of the world, everything changed because God’s faithful love simply would not and could not take “no” for an answer. God’s love would not let sin, evil, hatred, lies, and even death have the final word.

So it is today on this morning in this little corner of the world and in every corner of our lives.

So it is for all of us.

Easter is God’s way of saying, “I’m here. I’m alive. I’m not going away. Get used to it!”

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good. God’s mercy endures forever.” AMEN. ALLELUIA!