

Easter 2a 2020  
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC  
April 19, 2020  
The Rev. Catherine L. Tatem  
MORNING PRAYER

Exodus 14:5-22   Psalm 146   1 John 1:1-7   John 20:19-31

Note that the gospel reading listed above is taken from the RCL for the Eucharistic liturgy for the day. Since Redeemer had a virtual service of Morning Prayer on this day, you might to read the John 20 passage, below, prior to reading this sermon.

**John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” <sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

<sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Alleluia! The Lord is risen! (The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!)

It is night, at the end of the first Easter day. Jesus is gone – the tomb is empty! – and Jesus has appeared to Mary. The disciples are hiding away in the upper room, the doors locked against anyone who might try to hurt them: religious leaders, Roman soldiers, people from that angry crowd who taunted Jesus, the people standing next to the fire when Peter denied Jesus out loud. We might have denied Jesus, too, but we escaped the question. The disciples are very afraid.

PEACE BE WITH YOU. Jesus appears and speaks! His first words offer those gathered a peace that came through crucifixion and a sealed tomb. God's triumph over evil and death is visible in this risen Christ who is, in fact, present with the disciples. Jesus has the scars of his torture and crucifixion; Jesus shows the disciples his hands, feet, and side. It is Jesus.

When Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preached about Easter Day, he said:  
It's Easter Sunday.  
It doesn't look like it.  
It doesn't smell like it.  
It doesn't really feel like it.  
But it's Easter anyway.

He could have been talking about that very first Easter ... or Easter in 2020. Neither look, smell, or feel like triumph, joy, and a peaceful spirit.

But it is Easter anyway. And the many truths of that first "hidden" Easter are still with us.

Jesus is real and is present, then and now. God raised Jesus' body out of death. In resurrected life, Jesus' body bears the scars of his humanity. We, too, through this victory of Christ, will be rise from death into new life. For Jesus and for us, this is bodily resurrection. I suspect that we, too, will bear some scars from this life.

Be assured today that however you celebrated Easter Day of 2020, it was – and is – Easter! The tomb is still empty. Jesus offers us his hard-won peace: Peace be with you. Jesus had told the disciples before his death: Peace I leave you – not as the world gives, but as *Jesus* gives. Jesus' peace is so much more than our world could ever give. The peace of Jesus means that peace is in the room with us right now. Even right now.

Because it is Easter – anyway.

In these unusual days:

- Be brave. Ask Jesus to bring you, to bring us, his peace. Ask to see Jesus' wounds if that is what you need to bolster your faith through a difficult time. Ask. See the wounds of Jesus, and know that he is present and real to you and for you. The 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote that our Lord often acts "according to our necessity [not his]; and if we really are so weak that nothing will do but thrusting a hand into his side, [Jesus] will let us do it. Nor do I wonder at this: if, for our sakes, he suffered a spear to be thrust there, he may well permit a hand to follow." Jesus wants to meet our needs.
- Seek and serve Christ in everyone you meet. In so doing, we will see Christ's body, his suffering, his love, his compassion, and his surrender to God's will. We will see new life. We will hear and live: Peace be with you.
- Be honest. Recognize that you may be feeling fear, loss, or even abandonment. You are not alone. Read a psalm or two and know that you are not alone. Call a friend and know that you are not alone. Call your priest and know that you are not alone. Know from deep within that, appropriate to the name of our church, we can confidently say:

**I know that my Redeemer lives!**

It is Easter anyway, my friends. Let's find it: through virtual worship and conversations, in prayer and praise with all the saints, with notes and phone calls and our own time of reflection and examination of ourselves and our practices of faith. We are in a new, unasked for, time. Embrace it because it is the life that we are living right now. We must live this life, the one that we have. Say until you mean it, know it: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he is with me.

Happy Easter anyway. Happy Easter season! Alleluia! Alleluia!