

Easter Day 2021
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC
April 4, 2021
The Rev. Catherine L. Tatem

Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 John 20:1-18

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!]

Happy, happy Easter Day! We are surrounded today with a cloud of witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. First, we remember where we were just a few days ago:
Jesus said, “It is finished. And breathed his last.”

⁴¹Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴²And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Early Easter morning, while it is still dark, Mary Magdalene is weeping. The tomb of Jesus is empty! Gone is Jesus’ body that had been covered in 100 pounds of burial spices. Mary arrived in darkness to anoint Jesus’ body – and it is gone. Peter and another disciple race to the tomb and see that the only things in the tomb are Jesus’ burial linen and head covering. Mary is alone, weeping, and when she looks again into the tomb – there are angels where Jesus’ head and feet had been!

Turning away, she hears the risen Jesus call her name: Mary. Her eyes are opened and she sees him! It is Jesus, and he has no need for those linen burial cloths. Jesus is no longer confined to a tomb, or to the world. Nothing that we have done: betrayed him, mocked him – killed him – stopped the love that God has for all of God’s creation. Jesus is real, alive, and on his way to the Father. Go and tell! He says to Mary. Go and tell that I am going to my father and my God, who is your Father, and your God. And nothing will ever separate you, Mary, from me or from my Father. Every barrier to the love is God has been destroyed, and the love of God rules the day. Jesus overcame death itself in living again for you and me. Alleluia!

Now, in this very special Easter season, we have the joy of celebrating it together; a then-unknown virus kept us apart last year; we are still under its threat, trying to be safe for yet a little longer – and even that virus did not contain Jesus. Jesus, shed of burial cloths, rose again last year, this year – and will never leave us. Even when our doors were closed, the risen Jesus was pouring out the love of God.

Friends, go and tell how we lived, how we worshipped: over the phone, over computers, in a parking lot! We loved with take home bags, new worship materials, drive by celebrations. Nothing stops the love of God through Jesus Christ. We have been sad, angry, at a loss, and weeping. Through Mary’s tears and our own, ... there is Jesus, ever-present, taking all of our sorrows to God. Friends, it is our turn to go and tell the story! How the church is still standing, how God shows up and loves us through everything.

Not every tomb in our life is empty. We are overwhelmed with quarantine fatigue, loneliness, skepticism and a violent world. We have our own losses: of time with family, with the ill and

dying, with job losses and cancers, confusion, despair: what sorry fills your tomb? You can empty that tomb today, right now. Because Jesus is risen, alive, and calls your name. God, through Jesus the Christ, knows you and loves you (us) beyond measure. and death, rules that are imposed upon us, our own losses and pain. The Good News is that Jesus is still risen! (Alleluia!)

Easter is not only an event that happened a long time ago. Easter proclaims a new reality in light of that empty tomb and a resurrected Christ. God still reaches into every tomb and fills it with new life! Easter is God's response to hopes that have been crushed, to pain that is too much to bear. Jesus the Christ IS our redeemer, and with you today!

So "go and tell" that our loving God, through Jesus, knows all of ourselves, from before our birth to right now, our loves and losses that we speak or leave unsaid. We are called to bring all of ourselves, without reservation, to God, and to love God and our neighbors with our heart, soul, and body. God, through Jesus the Christ takes everything that we have – our hopes, our burdens, our sorrows, and lifts them, through the cross, and pours new life upon us.

Jesus' victory over death is part of our lives as individuals and as Christ's new body, the church. The church – that's us – practices resurrection in homes, in nursing homes, neighborhoods, hospitals, and here. We proclaim Christ's victory right here in our worship, the practices of our Christian faith. We proclaim Christ's victory in celebrating the Eucharist, in presenting ourselves at God's altar. We proclaim Christ's victory when we leave here and take that victory with us into the community and the world in tangible ways – with our lives, with our words, with our actions. Through everything that we offer, Christ lives through the way that we live Christ's resurrection.

Welcome to your new life! Welcome to the joy of Easter! Welcome to the extravagant, unbounded saving love of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Now go and tell! Alleluia, alleluia!