



Easter Sunday (A)
April 16, 2017
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

For me and perhaps for many of us, the question looms large as to how we can celebrate the glorious resurrection of Jesus this day in the midst of a world very different than who we are at this very moment in time. Yet, God has called us to be here, and today, we celebrate the glorious light that burst from the darkened tomb on that day we now call Easter. So, what is that light which shatters even the darkest times in our lives?

A familiar hymn text and tune which many of us learned as children is “I want to walk as a child of the light”. (Kathleen Tomerson, 1966) The second stanza of the text seemed appropriate and compelling to me when I began to think about and pray about today’s message. That text of “I want to walk as a child of light” goes like this:

“I want to see the brightness of God;
I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of righteousness, shine on my path,
And show me the way to the Father.

In him there is no darkness at all;
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God;
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.”

For those of you who have here since I began my ministry on Feb. 20, you already know that I love children. I really do. I see in them God’s spark of light that is amazing in eyes and out-stretched hands especially at Communion. On Maundy Thursday, I washed the feet of several children especially little Nevaeh, a two year old who celebrated her second birthday with us on Thursday. Huge tears of joy welled up in my eyes.

The child-like hymn of “I want to walk as a child of light” has profound meaning as do most if not all of the hymns we sing. After all, a hymn begins with a sacred text. The music flows from the text and supports the meaning of the text. It is the text which is the driver.

How can we see the “brightness of God” and see Jesus shattering the darkness of our lives, the darkness of sadness, the darkness of inequality, the darkness of homelessness, the darkness of refugees fleeing terrorism and war, the darkness of the death of loved ones... darkness that too often shrouds our lives and the lives of others around the world?

“I want to walk as a child of the light” confirms our belief that no matter what, Jesus is “The light of the city of God”. Today, we invite Jesus, the risen Christ, to shine in our hearts this day, the day of his resurrection, and to shatter the darkness of our lives.

We have come here from many places. Some of you have been here every Easter Sunday for most of your life. Some of us are here for our very first Easter Sunday.

All of us are here because God has called us to be here, and we have said “yes” to that invitation. We have said “yes” to that call to celebrate, a celebration which offers us the opportunity to walk through the darkness of life and into the light of Christ’s presence.

It is ‘light’ that is the driver of today’s celebration. It is light that burst forth from the darkness of the tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid. It is that same light which calls us into relationship with God, into the heart of God, the Word of God, the Eucharist of God and the community of God gathered in this magnificent and beautifully decorated historic church in the Name of Jesus.

Last night at the Easter Vigil, we lit the paschal fire and then lit the great Paschal Candle, the symbol of the light of Christ at Easter. That light shines brightly on this day and every day, rain or shine.

Christ, the Passover Lamb of God, endured the ups and downs of human life and experienced the joys and sadness of life. Jesus endured his own death on the cross as the love of God sacrificed for us that we might have life in abundance. That love of God, that out-pouring of God’s very self in Jesus, ignites our minds and hearts to embrace the love of God in Jesus. Our call as Christians is to make that love our own and take it into the world.

Taking the love of Jesus into the world *is* our call as Christians whether we are on fire with that love or even lukewarm about our commitment to it. My guess is that we are here today because our faith has compelled us to be here. For your faith and your commitment to celebrate this day, I am grateful, and I am confident that God is as well.

I fear that too often we believe in an impersonal God who is ‘out there beyond the blue’ and not in our hearts and deeply involved in the joys and sadness of life. Jesus is God who walks with us in life, who rejoices with us when we are joyous and who weeps with us when we weep.

Jesus is the ‘down-to-earth’ living presence of God in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the reason we are here today. It is he and his glorious resurrection which are the driving forces of our Easter celebration.

John’s Gospel tells us that “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed...” In her excitement and perhaps even confusion, she ran back to tell the disciples. Peter and the other disciples accompanied her to the tomb to find “the linen wrappings” and “the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head”. But, Jesus was not there.

Just as he had promised, Jesus had arisen from the tomb, perhaps one of the most mysterious events in all of human history. That mystery unfolded for Mary Magdalene on that morning. She came to the profound realization that Jesus had actually accomplished that which he said he would accomplish. He rose from the dead.

Mary returned to the disciples after her encounter with the risen Christ. In John’s gospel, Mary’s encounter with the risen Jesus was confirmed in her great proclamation of faith, “I have seen the Lord.”

As Christians, what does it mean for us to “have seen the Lord”? Today, we experience Easter joy in Word, music, Sacrament and one another in the very essence and presence of God in Jesus in our celebration of Easter. We have come from far and wide because we are loved “with an everlasting love” as Jeremiah tells us, and we are forever changed. What does it mean to be changed?

As the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church tells us, we are “crazy Christians”. We are indeed changed. When we embrace the Gospel of Christ and live it to the very best of our abilities, we put that change, that transformation, into action. We are called in to the joy and exuberance of the Resurrection to be on fire with the Spirit of God through Jesus and live it every day of our lives.

At St. Mark’s, we are on fire with that Spirit, as we put our faith into action on Sundays and throughout the week as well. Just take a look at our new Ministry Directory found on the resource tables at both entrances. We are a community of faith active and alive in the Name of Jesus!

My hope, my prayer, for each of us is that even in the midst of the darkness in which we might find ourselves, we can and will find the risen Christ deep within us. Jesus is risen and remains with us always!

May the Risen Christ reign in our hearts this day and every day. For he is risen, and our hearts are on fire with Easter joy!

We are forever changed. We are transformed by the power of the Resurrection to go into the world to help make it a better place in which to live! Alleluia! Amen!