



ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

“ALLELUIA, CHRIST IS RISEN”
EASTER DAY

ACTS 10:34-43
PSALM 118
COLOSSIANS 3:1-4
JOHN 20:1-18

A SERMON BY THE REV. CAROLINE STACEY
APRIL 12, 2020

Christ is Risen! Happy Easter to each of you. I am recovering and quarantined at home from what is presumably a milder case of COVID, as so many are throughout our community and the world. I wanted to send an Easter message, along with my very best wishes, love and prayers for you and your loved ones. To those who have already lost loved ones to this disease, we send our deepest condolences and prayers. To those who right now are struggling with COVID, may God bless you and send the hope and strength of the Holy Spirit to sustain you in the fight against this terrible disease.

This year, Holy Week and Easter and everything else feels upended and unnatural. Global pandemics will do that to us. Our world is upside down. In a grotesque irony, some reports project that deaths from COVID will peak on Easter Sunday. We see a shocking confirmation of enormous racial disparity in how this disease is impacting people of color – the latest injustice we are inflicting on people of color in our country. We don't know when or how a new normal will emerge. We will all be changed. There is bereavement and grief for loved ones already lost. Loved ones have died alone, and funeral gatherings cannot be planned. For many, there will be trauma

and PTSD when we emerge blinking from our isolation. Everything about what we are living through gives us a different perspective on the Resurrection and a deeper urgency to our prayers and our faith. *What is true* this Easter morning?

Barbara Brown Taylor in her book *Home by Another Way* points out how unnatural *resurrection* is. In each of the gospels, the disciples fail to recognize Jesus when he is standing, wounds and all, in front of their eyes. So out of the natural order of things, so completely unexpected, is Jesus' Resurrection that even the disciples think it is a collective delusion borne of grief and wishful thinking. The belief that resurrection is a delusional crutch for those of us who cannot handle the reality of death is as old as that first Easter morning.

This is a horrendous time we are living through. But it is still Easter. Resurrection still happens. And it is still the year of our Lord, *Anno Domini*, 2020 as we inscribe on our Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil. Resurrection is the container holding time, not the other way around. Resurrection limits death, not the other way around. Resurrection boxes in death, not the other way around. This is the day when we

celebrate the central promise of our faith that *death is buried*. The terror of these times makes Resurrection even more – yes – joyful. God will open all of our graves in the power of Christ.

It is still Easter when there is no gathered church to observe it. The church gathered is not only a Sunday morning congregation. The church is in all times and places, those who have gone before us and those who will come after us. The eternal church is *always* gathered, always praising God, always singing Alleluia. Every Eucharistic prayer reminds us:
Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Wherever and however we are worshiping today, we are joining in with the saints on earth and in heaven. The church is gathered even now, and it is triumphant.

What is true? We are all human. Life is an incredible gift and each day is a blessing. *You* are an Easter blessing from God to the world. Love yourself and love God's gift of each other. We will get through this together and God willing we will be wiser in every

way: scientifically and spiritually. Each day brings us closer to the end of this pandemic in its current form, just as Paul reminds us that *salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers*. What spiritual lessons will we have learned? How do you feel your heart and mind and soul are changing? What is God up to in you? I mean, beyond fear. Everyone is anxious; that is normal. *Beyond* fear, what is God up to in your heart and mind?

One of my touchstone Bible verses has long been: *perfect love casts out fear. There is no fear in love*, the author of the First Letter of John writes. (John is writing about God's judgment, but the spiritual principle applies to our earthly lives too). Only a greater power can cast out our fear - we can't pray or battle it away on our own. The spiritual weapon God gives us is the greater power of love: *God's love made known most fully in Jesus Christ. God's triumphant, undefeated love shines brightest of all today. Jesus Christ is risen today, once for all, for me and for you.* **Alleluia.**

Amen

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