



Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

* *Please stand if you are able*

Prelude: "Morning Has Broken/See What a Morning"

Scottish traditional / K. Getty &
S. Townend. Arr. E. Pacheco

Gathering

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting the Christ Candle

Acolyte: Jesus Christ is alive and among us now. Even as the light pushes back the dark, so to Jesus Christ has defeated death. Let us worship God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

* Call to Worship

Liturgist: Shouts of joy and victory resound!

All: The Lord has done mighty things!

Liturgist: I will not die but live and will proclaim what the Lord has done.

All: The Lord has not given us over to death.

Liturgist: Open the gates, I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

All: We will give thanks, for the Lord is our salvation.

Liturgist: The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,

All: the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Liturgist: The Lord has done it this very day;

All: let us rejoice today and be glad!

Psalm 118:15-24 adapted

All Singing: 182 “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”
Singing verses 1, 2, 3 and 5

God's Greeting
God's People Greeting One Another

Reconciliation

Liturgist: If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.
And those who have fallen asleep in Christ are also lost.

All: If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all people.

Silent Confession and Lament

Liturgist: But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. And, when the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

All: He will reign and all enemies will be put under his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. *I Corinthians 15:17-26 adapted*

Liturgist: So, where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?

**All: The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
But, thanks be to God! He has given us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**

* **All Singing: 707 “Goodness is Stronger Than Evil”**
Singing through 3 times

Liturgist: Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. *I Corinthians 15:55-58 adapted*

Proclamation

Prayer for Illumination

All: Lord, we do not always recognize your coming to us. Reveal yourself in the opening of your Word and in the breaking of bread. Send your Spirit that we would recognize you and in recognizing follow. Amen.

Scripture: Acts 10:34-43

Minister: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon: A Slow Dawn Rising

* **All Singing: 770 “In Christ Alone”**

Institution

Minister: Great is the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.**

Thanksgiving
Invitation
Communion
Acclamation

* **All Singing:** **199** “Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain”
Singing verse 4

**Alleluia! Now we cry to our Lord immortal,
who triumphant, burst the bars of the tomb’s dark portal;
Alleluia! With the Son, God the Father praising;
Alleluia! Yet again to the Spirit raising.**

Dedication

Prayers of the People

* **All Singing:** **205** “Alleluia! Jesus is Risen”
Singing verses 1 and 2

Benediction

Minister: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord in the power of his resurrection.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the
Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **Alleluia! Amen.**

Minister: Christ is risen!

All: **Christ is risen, indeed!**

Postlude: “Hallelujah Chorus”

G.F. Handel

Worship Leaders

Organist: Dora Diephouse
Pianist / Vocalist: Erin Pacheco
Violin / Vocalist: Ben Friesen
Sound / Video: Schuyler Roozeboom
Minister: Roger Nelson

9:00 AM Service

Liturgist: Julane Bellin
Prayer: Steve Bellin

10:15 AM Service

Acolyte: Cody Decker
Liturgist: Tina Decker
Prayer: Gary Medema
Vocalists: Jan Kosmal
Jackie Archer

Hymns are from *Lift Up Your Hearts* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013)
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5825 W 151st Street, Oak Forest, IL 60452
www.hope-crc.org

Text: Acts 10: 34-43
Title: A Slow Dawn Rising
Date: 04.04.21
Roger Allen Nelson

When we lived in New York every Christmas Eve meant a road trip to the west. After a service with cute kids in costumes, Silent Night by candle light, and the sharing of Christmas cheer, we would load-up the mini-van and drive through the night to be with family on Christmas morning. We cut across New York, forged the frozen tundra of Canada, and traversed the width of Michigan, arriving just in time for breakfast.

Today our kids share fond memories of what they read, watched, or listened to while we traveled. There were snacks and Christmas stocking gifts doled out slowly over the long drive. There's delightful family lore about their traveling dispositions and the quirky details they remember.

But my favorite part was watching the Christmas morning sun come up. We were driving west, so over my shoulder, seen through the rearview mirror, there was the slow illumination of the world. Sandi and the kids would typically be asleep as the darkness melted away and somewhere in eastern Michigan a new day began to emerge.

It wasn't dramatic.

It didn't knock me to the ground.

It didn't blind me.

It didn't bowl me over.

But as the sun changed shades of light, as there was a slow dawn rising,
I watched the new day emerge.

Dear friends, the resurrection was a slow dawn rising for Peter.

He wasn't struck down on the road to Damascus or Detroit. He wasn't blinded by the light. But over time, as Peter began to make sense of what he'd seen, as he tried to sort out the implications of the resurrection he saw a new world emerge.

Consider our text....

Peter is summoned by Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman Centurion. Having denied and deserted Jesus in his hour of greatest need, only to see Jesus resurrected in some bodily form, Peter has since experienced the Spirit of God being poured out in ways that stretch his sensibilities about the nature of the world, and he's been visited in dreams that keep expanding his understanding of God's will and way. And now, before Cornelius in a room full of strangers, Peter is asked to tell what God's told him.

Let's just sit with that for moment....

Peter followed Jesus, an itinerant rabbi, with the common hope that this rabbi was the messiah – one who would usher in the reign of God and restore the Hebrews to sovereignty over their own land. Only to see Jesus executed in a manner that was reserved for the worst criminals – for insurrectionists and enemies of the state. Peter's hopes, the sense of purpose and confidence that he known over the last few years were shattered....

Only then to see Jesus resurrected. Peter was completely disorientated. Muddled and befuddled, his head was spinning and his heart was in defib.

So, like marbles tumbling out of a bag, Peter blurts out the truth as he experienced it:

We saw Jesus! We saw what Jesus did! And we saw what they did to him. They killed him by hanging him on a tree. But, God raised him up! And we saw him! God chose us to eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead! And Jesus commanded us to tell others: that he was one appointed by God to be judge, that he was the one that the prophets were speaking about, and that in him there's forgiveness of sins.

And therein lies the crux of the resurrection.

Like an hourglass that narrows throughout the history of the people of Israel – through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, to the crucifixion of Jesus – the center spills out in resurrection. The resurrection isn't tangential, incidental, or inconsequential; it's the central act of the whole hour glass. The crucifixion and resurrection are the apex of God's action in human history.

Therefore, Karl Barth defines the resurrection this way:

...life with its imprisonments and tragedies of sorrow and of sin, life with its doubts and unanswered questions, life with its grave-mounds and crosses for the dead, is a unique enigma, so immense that all answers are silent before it. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can one do who is fated to this life of sin and death, with its thousand-fold festering needs; there is nothing one can do to amend it; nothing fills up this vacuum. Admit it; there is no way out!

Unless it is the possibility of a miracle happening – no, not a miracle, but the miracle of God – God's incomprehensible, saving intervention and mercy, the all-inclusive renewal that leads from death to life that comes from him, God's life-word, resurrection from the dead!

Resurrection, not progress, not evolution, not enlightenment, but a call from heaven to us: "Rise up! You are dead, but I will give you life!"

Now. You undoubtedly came to church this morning expecting to hear something about the resurrection. You probably had in mind easter lilies, women in colorful hats, the Hallelujah Chorus, and the promise of life after a long cold Covid winter. You may have great faith that the tomb was empty and Jesus defeated death so therefore we go to heaven. And I don't want to dispel any of those good vibes.

But, is that what Peter meant when he answered the question of Cornelius?

Is the resurrection about life after death?

Our text records the first few words of Peter's account as:

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts those from every nation...

In Greek the verb tense is of an action that's ongoing. It is better translated, "I am in the process of realizing how true it is..."

Like a slow dawn rising Peter was realizing that the resurrection meant the dawning of a whole new world. It meant the reconfiguration of creation. Peter was in the process of learning that the sand of the hourglass spills out to all creation, to Jew and Gentile alike, to all people and to every expression of death. It was dawning on Peter that exclusivity wasn't part of a post-resurrection world.

At a regional Christian Reformed Church gathering, an elder from a local congregation stood to testify about how God was at work in his life. In his late-seventies he has a delightful spirit and for decades I've known him to love and serve the church.

With his lip quivering and tears welling up in his eyes he spoke about facing the decision to close their church. Attendance had dwindled, membership was tanking, and they couldn't afford to keep going.

But, he then told about someone who wasn't white or Dutch American offering to provide vision and leadership. And while he'd always thought that they were the church (again white and Dutch) he was in the process of learning that the kingdom was so much bigger and broader than his understanding. He said that if God could change him than maybe their church had a chance to make it as well....

Now. If what he heard in those seventy-plus years of church life was that the church was white and Dutch then maybe they should close their doors. But, if like a slow dawn rising, a new world was being illuminated by the resurrection extending to all people – without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, culture, orientation, or denomination... If what he was learning was that God doesn't show partiality but accepts those from all nations, then the resurrection is still illuminating a new world. Thanks be to God.

Willie Jennings puts it this way:

God's tastes are much wider than Peter had imagined up to this moment. Peter is at the threshold of revelation. That revelation is not of God's wider palette for people, but that Peter's range of whom to love and desire must expand until it stretches beyond his own limits into God's life. God is pressing Peter's aesthetic toward death and resurrection – the dying and rising to new desires is now the call emerging for him.

Resurrection is a slow dawn rising for Peter, for that elder, for you and me....

Yes! Resurrection is the untrammelled defeat of death.

Yes! Jesus was dead and is now alive.

Yes! The miracle of God means that there is no longer anything to fear.

Life and love win. Thanks be to God.

But! The resurrection also means that creation is reconfigured in such a way that every expression of death finally will hold no sway and we can side with and work for mercy, forgiveness, inclusion, compassion and peace. Like a slow dawn rising the world illuminated by the resurrection looks very different. The resurrection means that our range of whom to love must expand until it stretches beyond our limits into God's life.

So, dear friends, how might the resurrection dawn rise in our hearts? Is it possible that there could be some growing realization, some slow coming illumination, some new expression of the resurrection in our life together? How would Christ be resurrected a new in our lives?

Resurrection is the hope of life after death – that is a comfort not to be sneezed at.

But, resurrection is also the hope that every smudge of death,
every dark tomb,
every experience of despair,
every broken promise,
every one excluded,
will be resurrected to the *shalom* God intended,
and the glory of God will dawn upon all creation.

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

Amen.