



Sunday, April 25, 2021

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Dear friends:

I never thought I would be quoting him in a church publication, but I guess there's a first time for everything.

"A single death is a tragedy; the death of millions is a statistic." - Joseph Stalin

This ruthless outlook allowed millions to die in the gulags and battlefields of the Soviet Empire, but unfortunately, such an outlook is not confined to the minds of dictators or the policies of totalitarian states. We have passed the mark of three-million Covid-19 related deaths globally. In our own country, hundreds die each week due to gun violence. Like many statistics, these are hard to comprehend, so we normalize them in our minds. But if it hits home, in a personal way, the horror and sadness is too terrible to bear. How are we to respond? The first thing is not to allow a tragedy to be reduced to a statistic, but to bear witness to these deaths that might have been avoided. We must allow our Resurrection faith to guide our actions and our hopes.

In his 1983 book, "The Power of the Powerless," the German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926), speaks of "the superabundance of God's future" as the guiding principle of all faith-inspired action.

"The Easter faith recognizes that the raising of the crucified Christ from the dead provides the great alternative to this world of death. This faith sees the raising of Christ as God's protest against death, and against all the people who work for death; for the Easter faith recognizes God's passion for the life of the person who is threatened by death and with death. And faith participates in this process of love by getting up out of the apathy of misery and out of the cynicism of prosperity, and fighting against death's accomplices, here and now, in this life. Weary Christians have often enough deleted this critical and liberating power from Easter. Their faith has then degenerated into the confident belief in certain facts, and a poverty-stricken hope for the next world, as if death were nothing but a fate we meet with at the end of life. But death is an evil power now, in life's very midst. It is the economic death of the person we allow to starve; the political death of the people who are oppressed; the social death of the handicapped; the noisy death that strikes through napalm bombs and torture; and the soundless death of the apathetic soul. The resurrection faith is not proved true by means of historical evidence, or only in the next world. It is proved here and now, through the courage for revolt, the protest against deadly powers, and the self-giving of men and women for the victory of life. It is impossible to talk convincingly about Christ's resurrection without participating in the movement of the Spirit "who descends on all flesh"

Sunday, April 25

- ▶ [**WATCH THE SERVICE**](#) at 10:00 am
- ▶ **COFFEE HOUR** on Zoom at 10:45 am

Navigating this Service

Use our [**Morning Prayer text**](#) or follow the Book of Common Prayer, pg. 75.

Calendar

Sunday, April 25

Virtual Church School

8:45 am on Zoom

Morning Prayer

10:00 am on YouTube

Virtual Coffee Hour

10:45 am on Zoom

Monday, April 26

"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" Reading

7:15 pm on Zoom

Wednesday, April 28

Handbell Rehearsal

6:30 pm in the Chapel

Virtual Youth Groups

7pm MS / 8pm HS on Zoom

Wednesday Conversations

7:00 pm on Zoom

Thursday, April 29

Bible Study

10:00 am on Zoom

Adult Choir Virtual Rehearsal

7:15 pm on Zoom

Sunday, May 2

Virtual Church School

8:45 am on Zoom

Morning Prayer

10:00 am on YouTube

Virtual Coffee Hour

10:45 am on Zoom

Masks are required for all in-person events

to quicken it.... Christ's resurrection is the beginning of God's rebellion. That rebellion is still going on in the Spirit of hope, and will be complete when, together with death, "every rule and every authority and power" is at last abolished (1 Cor. 15:24). The resurrection hope finds living expression in men and women when they protest against death and the slaves of death. But it lives from something different – from the superabundance of God's future. Its freedom lives in resistance against all the outward and inward denials of life. But it does not live from this protest. It lives from joy in the coming victory of life."

Humanity is, as Stalin was, alarmingly comfortable dealing with death in terms of statistics. What will it mean for us if we come to treat life in the same way?

God bless, *Fr. Alan*

Announcements

Join the Wednesday Conversations!

This spring Eric Braun, our Seminarian Intern, is hosting a series of weekly small group discussions via Zoom, **Wednesdays at 7:00 pm**. Short readings and video links will be provided prior to each week's meeting.

In April, the Wednesday Conversations will center on the Gospels: Why are there four of them? How are they different? Who were they written for? If you're curious about these and other questions, now's the chance to find out more!

On April 28, we will discuss John: The Mystic's Gospel.
[ARTICLE](#) | [ZOOM MEETING](#)

Coming in May: *"The History of Race and Racism in the Episcopal church."* Join Eric Braun and members of the Social Justice Ministry for a thoughtful four-part discussion on this important topic.

May 5 Defining terms: *What do we mean by race, racism, and power?*

May 12 The Anglican Church: *A church of Empire*

May 19 The changing times of Post-War America

May 26 Where do we go from here?
Strategies on race and racism moving forward



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Prelude: *Song Without Words, Op. 61 no. 1*

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809-1847)

Minji Kim, piano

Hymn: *Jesus, Our Mighty Lord*

Hymnal, no. 478

1 Je - sus, our might - y Lord, our strength in sad - ness,—
 2 Good shep-herd of your sheep, your own de - fend - ing,—
 3 Glo - rious their life who sing, with glad thanks-giv - ing,—

the Fa - ther's con - quer ing Word, true source of glad - ness;
 in love your chil - dren keep to life un - end - ing.—
 true hymns to Christ the King in all their liv - ing:—

your Name we glo - ri - fy, O Je - sus, throned on high;
 You are your - self the Way: lead us then day by day
 all who con - fess his Name, come then with hearts a - flame;

you gave your - self to die for our sal - va - tion.
 in your own steps, to we pray, O Lord most ho - ly.
 the God of peace ac - claim as Lord and Sa - vior.

Opening Sentences

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 77

Grace and Peace**Preces**

Hymnal, no. S-33

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 80

Invitatory

Hymnal, no. S-16

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 46

Psalm 23

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; *
I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures *
and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He revives my soul *
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil; *
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.
- 6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

First Lesson: Acts 4:5-12

Paul Wise

The rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is

'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;
it has become the cornerstone.'

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

Jubilate

Hymnal, no. S-41
Book of Common Prayer, pg. 80

The Gospel: John 10:11-18

Paul Wise

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Canticle 8: *The Song of Moses*

Hymnal, no. S-208

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 85

Sermon

Fr. Alan Gibson

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

What does it mean to say something like, “Christ is Risen”? People don’t rise from the dead on a regular basis. So, if we say we believe that someone has risen from the dead, shouldn’t it hit us in the face like a bucket of ice water? If death has been defeated, shouldn’t it make a difference in the way we look at life, especially life as we are having to live it now with so much death around us in our hospitals and on our streets? If it does not, is it because we’ve come to take the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his triumph over death, for granted?

The four gospels report a wide range of reactions to the news of Christ’s resurrection: everything from fear to joy, disbelief to hysteria. Not one of the Evangelists mentions a reaction of indifference. Not one person on hearing the news that Jesus is alive said, “Oh, that’s nice,” and then went on with what they were doing. No one, not even those who didn’t believe it, took this news for granted. For some, just the possibility was a threat to their understanding of the world and their place in it. Others looked for somewhere to hide. And then there were those, for whom, just the idea was too crazy to believe.

But for some, it was much too real – it was true, Christ is risen. Those people drew near to each other and began to worship God in a new way

— sharing a common meal, and a common life caring for each other, and in so doing, adopted a new understanding of the world that attracted more followers. They came to be known as Christians.

For those first Christians, the truth of their master's rising from the dead made it impossible for life to go on in the way they had been living it. Everything around them, right down to their own flesh and blood, was recast in the light of the Risen Christ. Things may have looked the same; felt, smelt, and tasted the same, but it was different, with a new authority in place over it all.

Daily life would go on. The patterns of the seasons would remain the same. Petty annoyances and major catastrophes would continue to afflict everyone, but not even any of that mattered in quite the way it once did. The tomb is empty. The cycle of life and death is replaced with the promise of eternal life. The world that seemed to be tossed around by passing powers and the whims of chance, is reclaimed and restored to the hand of the God who first created it, and who out of love for it, lived, died and rose again in it. Nothing could be taken for granted ever again because God infused life itself with God's power.

That first generation, as we read in the Book of Acts, was inspired to take bold steps. A few of them hit the road to tell the story. Others financed those missions. Still others shared what they had, so that the needs of all could be met. The point is that their experience of this new life drew out a response from them. Not just a nod, not just lip service, but something meaningful from the depths of their hearts. Perhaps what made these first daring commitments to the life of the resurrection possible was that anyone could participate and be part of the story. Anyone could do something that mattered. Not just the rich and well-connected, or the bright and talented, but anyone who sought a new life, could find it in Christ's. That is still the case.

It's a struggle to live in a world turned upside down. But when has the world truly been right? It certainly wasn't when Jesus walked the earth, nor once he left it. Let's not make the mistake of thinking that our pre-pandemic world was a perfect one. This virus has simply turned a spotlight on just how much humanity has struggled to pull the world out of God's hands, with only suffering and sadness to show for the effort. Yet Christ is still risen. His tomb is still empty. The life we've been given in him calls us into a world that lives and breathes in the certainty that death is defeated. This demands a response.

It might be better if, from the beginning, we had not believed at all, than to hear the good news of the resurrection and say nothing more with

our lives than, “Oh, that’s nice.” We can see throughout our society the effects of taking things for granted. We know it can degrade a culture. Just imagine what it can do to a soul. In a society, those ill-effects can be felt for generations. If those same ill-effects take over a soul, it can be felt for eternity.

Apostles Creed

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 96

The Prayers

Collect of the Day

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Anthem: *I Know that My Redeemer Liveth (Messiah)*

Georg Frederic Handel (1685-1759)

Celia Bridges, Soprano

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

General Thanksgiving

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 101

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Concluding Versicle

Hymnal, no. S-55

Closing Hymn: Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Hymnal, no. 708

1 Sa - vior, like a shep - herd lead us; much we need thy
2 Ear - ly let us seek thy fa - vor, ear - ly let us

ten - der care; in thy plea - sant pas - tures feed us;
learn thy will; do thou, Lord, our on - ly Sa - vior,

for our use thy folds pre - pare. Bless - ed Je - sus!
with thy love our bos - oms fill. Bless - ed Je - sus!

Bless - ed Je - sus! Thou hast bought us, thine we are.
Bless - ed Je - sus! Thou hast loved us: love us still.

Postlude: Song Without Words, Op. 61 no. 6

Minji Kim, piano

Felix Mendelssohn

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