

Bible Study
Easter Sunday, Year C
March 27, 2016

[RCL] Acts 10:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

“God shows no partiality... preaching peace by Jesus Christ.” Experiencing Holy Week can be tumultuous. It can be painful, uncomfortable, fear inducing, or even scary. It naturally sets up a dichotomy of those who persecute Jesus and those who follow Jesus. But in this passage from Acts, Peter, the rock of the Church, proclaims God’s impartiality and peace, even through the death of God’s son. He calls us witnesses more than once.

- How will we move through division, partiality, or any other kind of wounded state to join God in preaching peace through Christ?
- What are the duties of a witness as given in this passage?
- If we are called to be witnesses, what does that mean we have to let go of from Holy Week in order to truly proclaim the Resurrection?

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

This psalm is full of body. Literally, it is full of imagery and vocabulary that incites tangible qualities. There is voice; there is sound; there is vision; there is touch; there is movement and action; there is stillness and stability. In the midst of all of this action and vibrancy, the psalmist continues to tie the imagery to sentiments like exultation, triumph, rejoicing, enduring mercy, strength, and salvation. This is a psalm of life. This is a psalm of praise. It brings overwhelming and unimaginable concepts like God’s marvelous work and unending mercy into the realm of the real and conceivable. This psalm brings to mind other miraculous acts like the miracle of manna from heaven, or the turning of water to wine, or perhaps even like the miracle of Easter morning.

- How can this psalm be used as a framework for considering other miraculous and unimaginable acts?
- How would you use the structure of the world to give voice to that which we cannot articulate?

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Christ as the first fruits can be a challenging image in today’s world. Not many of us tend the land for nourishment. Instead, we walk or drive or bike or commute in some way to a market or grocery store. Death and life are today’s lectionary focus. Here, in 1 Corinthians, we find another, more explicit explanation of the significance of Christ and his triumph over death. But still we are faced with this idea of first fruits. So, let’s try to put it in a more current contextual interface. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” This is the inscription on Lily and James Potter’s tombstone in the popular young adult series, Harry Potter. They, as parents of Harry, sacrifice themselves so that Harry might live. And live he does. In fact, he saves the entire wizarding world. They are the first fruits, in that context. So, we find this imagery everywhere: scripture, pop-culture, music, and beyond.

- How can we find more ways to understand what it means to be the first fruits?
- What is the significance of this imagery and how can we bring it to mind in new ways now?

- How does thinking about this in terms of popular culture help us understand Christ's role in defeating all enemies of the world, including death?

Luke 24:1-12

It's Easter! The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed! I think, sometimes though, that our astonishment at the Risen Lord is dulled by the waves of time and exposure. We celebrate Easter every year. The stories are always a little different according to the Gospel we are reading, but the truth remains the same - Jesus Christ rises from the dead.

Try this thought exercise. Take a moment. Imagine you are visiting the newly covered grave of a loved one to adorn it with flowers. You are in the midst of grief. The likelihood is that you haven't eaten or slept much the last few days. As you approach the burial place, you notice the ground is dug up, the lid is off the coffin, and there is nothing inside. Now take it a step further and imagine what it would be like, after days of grieving, to know that your loved one had come back to life. How do you feel? What do you say? Are there words adequate to describe your joy and amazement?

This moment of discovery and acclamation is the Easter celebration. This is the feeling we should harness on this Easter Sunday. Look to Peter as another example. And then likewise, imagine yourselves in the role of the apostles hearing the news. Let your disbelief, unease, excitement, joy, uncertainty, and any other emotion you feel through these thought exercises inform and grow your faith. We follow the Risen Lord.

- How will you encounter the Resurrection?

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