

Title: A Season of Resurrection

Date: 4/9/2023 (Easter Day, Year A)

Location: St. Alban's Episcopal Church

Service: 9am, 11:15am Holy Eucharist (Hybrid)

Readings: [Jeremiah 31:1-6](#); [Colossians 3:1-4](#); [Matthew 28:1-10](#); [Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24](#)

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/anuRrvPk5s?t=2045>

The same stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

On this day the Lord has acted;

we will rejoice and be glad in it.

(Ps 118 22-24)

Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

(The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!)

We have emerged from the forty days of Lent. Whether you gave up something from your normal routine or added something to it, I pray that your Lenten practice revealed something new. I pray that it has brought you closer to right relationship with God and with your neighbors and more fully into your identity as a child of God.

If you are willing to share, I'd love to hear your reflections or listen as you process the effect of your Lenten practices. Whatever you learned, I hope you will take that with you into the fifty days of Easter.

Yes, you heard me correctly. I said **fifty days**. We do a lot of planning for Easter Sunday. Today, we have a special service at church, we eat a special meal, we spend time with special people.

But Easter is not just one day; it is fifty days.

To be clear, this isn't about rewarding ourselves with fifty days of feasting after forty days of fasting. Whether you fasted from chocolate or alcohol, from pride or humility, from being too dependent on others or too self-sufficient, this isn't about swinging back to the other extreme.

For Lent, we choose one or more aspects of our lives to deconstruct, to pick apart and examine more closely. When we start that kind of analysis, it can be easy to end up in a loop, stuck in a spiral, or down a rabbit hole. Sometimes, it's easier to pinpoint what we don't want to do than what we want to do instead. Sometimes, it's easier to identify what is weighing us down than what will help us come alive, especially when the burden is heavy and is tied up with larger forces beyond our control. All you have to do is read the news.

So, it's important to pick a stopping point ahead of time. This helps us get out of our heads and take a step back so we can see what God is doing **in** our lives and **with** our lives.

As we enter the Easter season, we might ask questions like:
What is the seed that God is planting at this moment in our lives?
Is God breathing new life into something we thought was dead?

That is the beauty of church seasons such as Lent and Easter. They remind us that there is a rhythm to our lives, that it is natural for our lives to be lived as seasons. Sometimes the ups and downs of our lives will mirror the mood of the church seasons, and sometimes they won't.

This teaches us that Easter **will** come, whether we are ready or not, whether we expect it to come or not.

Easter will come, not because it's natural, not because we have done all the right things, but because our God loves us fiercely and well and wants more for us than we humans could have ever imagined or hope for.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who came to see the tomb had no idea what they were in for. Yes, they had followed Jesus from Galilee and served by his side (Mt 27:55-56). Yes, this means they probably heard Jesus say more than once that he will be killed and raised again after three days (Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19). But it's one thing to know it in our heads, and another thing to know it in our bodies and the depths of our souls.

Consider the evidence of their eyes. They had been among the many women who saw the crucifixion. Though they were watching from a great distance, they felt the earth shake and saw the rocks split. They had sat opposite the tomb as Joseph of Arimathea rolled a great stone to seal the entrance (Mt 27:61).

They were there by themselves as he walked away; none of the other disciples showed up. None of the other disciples waited.

Perhaps the other disciples stayed away because the chief priests and the Pharisees put guards at the tomb. Perhaps they stayed away because they were traumatized by the death of their teacher and friend. Perhaps they were paralyzed by grief and were afraid that they would be the next to die.

No matter how Jesus tried to prepare them, the speed and violence of his execution was still a shock.

Death is just...so...final.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had no idea what to expect, and still, they showed up on that third morning. And what a morning it was!

- There was **another** great earthquake
- The guards fainted at the sight of an angel who looked like lightning dressed in snow
- An angel rolled back the stone to show them that Jesus is not there,

that he has been raised.

- They were commissioned to carry a message to the other disciples.
They are to meet Jesus in Galilee, back where everything began.

Whether or not they fully understood what was happening, they went with it. They left not just with great fear, but also with great joy. And this was **before** they encountered Jesus on the road.

Instead of a dead body, they found an empty tomb. Instead of witnessing an ending, they were commissioned to be messengers of a new beginning. They expected death, and they had a front row seat to resurrection.

On Easter Day and throughout the Easter season, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. This is the time we remind ourselves that Jesus was not just a wise teacher among many wise teachers. He didn't just come to teach us morals or ethics or how to have better relationships, though all that is good and important.

Jesus was the Son of God and the Son of Mary, fully human and fully divine. Jesus was crucified, suffered death, and was buried. Then on the third day he rose again,¹ as in, he was once again back among the living.² How does any of that even work? What are the mechanics behind it? Can we replicate that in a lab, or with artificial intelligence?

The Christian faith is not one we can reason ourselves into. It's a mystery that cannot be solved, one that isn't meant to be solved. It's a mystery that invites us into something bigger than we could have ever hoped for or imagined. It's a mystery that invites us to stay curious and to keep asking questions, to stretch our minds and imagination beyond what logic tells us is possible.

We worship a God who turns rejected stones into cornerstones. All that we have broken, all that we think is broken in our lives and in our world can be redeemed and become the foundation for something new. This is true even when we can't see how it would be possible, especially when we can't see how it would be possible.

The God we worship took something seemingly as inevitable as death and turned it into **a** stopping point rather than **THE** stopping point. When we seem to be at a dead end, when we have lost all hope, God says, "Find a friend and make your way to the tomb. That which you think is dead is not actually dead."

When we want to tear everything down and turn away from everyone and everything, God reminds us to walk toward Galilee, back to where our journey started. Christ is there, waiting to show us who we are, and who we can become. Our siblings and brothers and sisters in Christ wait for us there, and what we cannot do alone, we can do together. Though we may walk with fear, let us also walk with joy, for Jesus has gone ahead of us, and Jesus will greet us on the way.

James and Bodhi and Zeke this is what you're in for, what your parents are signing you up for. Don't worry, you'll be in good company, with your parents and grandparents and godparents, and this body of Christ surrounding you, walking by your side.

In these fifty days of Easter, may you recognize resurrection, and may you be filled with the fierce love of God and the hopeful joy of the women as you SEEK resurrection.

Happy Easter!

¹ https://www.bcponline.org/General/nicene_creed.html

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-rose-again.html>