

Worship@Home 07th April 2024



Call to Worship

Psalm 100:1-2:

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."

Opening Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, Come. Open our ears, our heart and our mind to your promise word today. Amen

Hymn: Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart (StF 477)

Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
Teach me to move in the power of your Spirit
Teach me to walk in the light of your presence
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart

Teach me to love with your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
You wrote the rhythm of life
Created heaven and earth
In You is joy without measure
So, like a child in your sight
I dance to see your delight
For I was made for your pleasure
Pleasure

Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'yes'
A will that leaps to obey you
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in your face
Let my whole being praise you
Praise you

Let us pray

Thank you Lord for your word that it may continue to sustain us in our spiritual journey today. Amen

Gospel reading: John 20:19-31

Time to Reflect-

The scene of 20:19–29 takes place on the evening of the same day as Mary's experience of Jesus in 20:11–18. Instead of being outside the tomb, however, the disciples are hiding inside, behind locked doors, for fear of the Jews. Jesus suddenly appears to them in spite of the locked doors and greets them, "Peace be with you." After he shows them his wounds, they rejoice that they "saw the Lord." At this point Jesus repeats his greeting, "Peace be with you." This time, however, the greeting is a prelude to commissioning. He sends out the disciples as God sent him. And as God breathed the spirit into the human in Genesis 2, so Jesus breathes on the disciples and gives them the Holy Spirit, whom he has claimed gives life (6:62). Along with the Spirit comes the authority to forgive and retain sins.

Thomas was not with the other disciples when all of this occurred so they report to him what has happened using the same language Mary had earlier used, "We have *seen* the Lord." But Thomas claims that he himself must *see* the wounds and touch them (literally "place my finger" into the wounds) or he will not *believe*. So a week later when Jesus appears again in the house, he greets the disciples with "Peace be with you," and then shows Thomas his wounds, offers to let him touch them, and says, "Do not doubt but *believe*." At this point Thomas goes further than anyone else in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel by calling Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Jesus' response to this profession of faith is, "Have you *believed* because you have *seen* me? Blessed are those who have not *seen* and yet have come to *believe*."

Interpreters have long been too hard on Thomas for requiring sight as proof for belief. Indeed, in light of the fact that the beloved disciple, Mary, and the disciples behind closed doors all believe *because* they have seen, preachers should look for a more sympathetic interpretation of Jesus' reply to Thomas. In the context of chapter 20, Jesus' reply to Thomas is not a rebuke to him so much as it is an affirmation of the readers. This blessing in turn enables the readers to affirm the purpose of the gospel that is described in the verses that follow: to support their faith through which they (i.e., we) have life (vv. 30-31).

During this season of social distancing, many of those listening to our sermons online may feel a sense of loss in having wanted the same experience of Easter they have known in the past: coming together, singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," shouting Hallelujahs, and having an Easter

Egg hunt on the front lawn of the church. After that wasn't able to occur, the story of Thomas appearing for the Second Sunday of Easter is a gift. When preachers ask people to identify with Thomas, they are inviting them to recognize that we do not all experience the resurrected Christ in the same way or at the same time, but that Christ comes to us nevertheless. Thus we can experience the resurrection even in our current circumstances.

The witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ testifies that Christian existence—life rooted in the story, language, and interpretation of the Christ Event—has a significance that extends beyond the limits that usually define human existence, i.e., beyond time, space, and yes even death. And, indeed, that significance extends beyond the limits on life we are experiencing during the pandemic as we face isolation, economic struggles, possible illness, and yes even death. Preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ should not focus on painting a portrait of the past stories as told in the New Testament but should paint a picture of resurrection now that enables the congregation to develop a new, concrete (albeit incomplete) vision of the present and the future in relation to the experience of Ultimate Meaning in the midst of current reality. The current state of “current reality” make this a challenge. But it is always a challenge to preach God's life-giving grace in a death-dealing world. John's repeated use of the language of *seeing*, is a reminder to the preacher to show and not just tell. We must offer our hearers scenes and stories drawn from the current crisis in which they can see resurrection and the significance of our life in Christ here and now in ways they have not yet recognized it.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: He is Lord, he is Lord (StF 348)

He is Lord He is Lord He is risen from the dead And
He is Lord Every knee shall bow Every tongue
confess That Jesus Christ is Lord

He is King, he is king he will draw all nations to
him, he is king. And the time shall be when the
world shall sing that Jesus Christ is king.

He is love, he is love he has shown us by his life
that he is love, all his people sing with one voice of
joy that Jesus Christ is love.

He is life, he is life he has died to set us free and he
is life and he calls us all to live evermore for Jesus

Christ is life.

Words: Anonymous

A prayer of blessing

Thank you for the Cross Lord. Thank you for loving
us in Jesus name we pray. Amen

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of
the week, and the doors of the house where the
disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,
'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed
them his hands and his side. Then the disciples
rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to
them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has
sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he
breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the
Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are
forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they
are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the
twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So
the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the
Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark
of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the
mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not
believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house,
and Thomas was with them. Although the doors
were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and
said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas,
'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out
your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but
believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my
God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed
because you have seen me? Blessed are those who
have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of
his disciples, which are not written in this
book. But these are written so that you may come
to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of
God, and that through believing you may have life
in his name.

Materials provided by Rev. Manoa Ratubalavu

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