

Easter
April 4, 2021

I wish you all the happiest and most blessed Easter your hearts can hold!

Alleluia, Christ is risen.
The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Praying together:

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us now pray together the collect of the day.

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hebrew Scripture
Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.
And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

The Response
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Confitemini Domino

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

2 Let Israel now proclaim,
"His mercy endures forever."

14 The Lord is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.

15 There is a sound of exultation and victory
in the tents of the righteous:

16 "The right hand of the Lord has triumphed!
the right hand of the Lord is exalted!
the right hand of the Lord has triumphed!"

17 I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has punished me sorely,
but he did not hand me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter them;
I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 "This is the gate of the Lord;
he who is righteous may enter."

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me
and have become my salvation.

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

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

24 On this day the Lord has acted;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

The Epistle **Acts 10:34-43**

Peter began to speak to Cornelius and the other Gentiles: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by

hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Gospel

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John.
Glory to you Lord Christ.

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Praise to you Lord Christ.

A Reflection

May the words written and the prayers of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. *Amen.*

I wish with all of my heart that we could be together this morning to lift our voices in praise of this day. But let's do the best we can even while apart – *Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia!* Brace yourself – we may be saying that a lot this morning. Know that I

am saying it this morning too – out loud – and with all the energy I have! *Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

It's Spring, and if it has turned out to be a nice day, open your windows and let some of that spring air in to move away the scent of sorrow and despair that has filled so much of our days. *Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

In thinking about Easter and the Risen Lord, and everything we have been through in the last year, I have found myself thinking a lot about mud. Yes, mud – but let me explain.

I have family that lives in Maine. I learned a lot about seasons when I visited up there – Fall was always beautiful, it was Fair time and usually when we got our pumpkin. Spring was when the sap ran in the Maple trees. The family has been making Maple syrup for now eight generations, with my uncle's children and now grandchildren carrying on the tradition.

But I describe this as happening in the Spring. But I have left out the other season that happens right after winter – this is the season known as Mud season.

Before the beauty of spring – before the lilacs and forsythia bloom, one must pass through Mud season. (The seasons have an order, after all!) The mud comes from all the melting snow, and it seems to get *everywhere*. You track it in the house – if you aren't careful it gets in your boots – trucks and tractors can slip and get stuck in this mud, as do cars. So, basically, everything is a real mess for a while – then spring arrives a bit more seriously. Things begin to bloom and one starts to believe Spring is finally arriving.

I think I thought of this as it feels very much like we have gone through a rather extended Mud season, with the dirtiness and mess seeming to surround us at every turn. There has just been no escaping the mud – it has been all around us for over a year now. But now we have the promise of Spring again, and the promise of new life showing itself in the beginning of buds on the Lilac in front of the house. And it's Easter and we celebrate the promise offered by the Resurrection.

We hear of this promise in today's Psalm – “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.” And it *is* marvelous in our eyes!

We read in the Book of Acts “They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” And we take note in amazement of the seemingly impossible happening.

But this miracle is one we see every Spring, too. We look on with amazement as the world seems to take a deep breath and bring life back to the world. And we are amazed at the deep breath God took in returning Jesus to life, also. You see, resurrection is not a one-time thing. It happens again and again all around us. But just once as it did with the Lord.

We read in the Gospel “Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher.)” Can you imagine her amazement? I can almost feel the increased heartbeat as she looked at the impossible – the miracle beyond imagination.

But Jesus continues to instruct, even now. “Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.”

Take note of this. In Latin Mary Magdalene is known as apostola apostolorum or “apostle to the apostles.” She saw the miracle and she shared the word. She witnessed this to the apostles who had seen so much.

So the mud is cleared away. (Yes, there may still be a bit here and there, but we can deal with that!) The promise is renewed. The hope is real and tangible. We hear “Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

May this promise wipe the tears from your eyes, may this resurrected life give you faith and hope of things to come and may the signs of renewed life around you fill your heart with indescribable joy!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.

Now lest renew our baptismal vows. (This is usually done as part of the Easter service – I offer it for your prayers and consideration today. Rest assured this will be something we will do together when we can!

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and
renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

I do.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

*He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

*He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

*I believe in the Holy Spirit
The Holy catholic church
The communion of saints
The forgiveness of sins
The resurrection of the body
And the life everlasting*

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help.

May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

Let us now pray as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us – out loud or to yourself – just know that God hears you.

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

The prayer of Spiritual Communion is from apartheid era South Africa. In that time many prisoners were denied the sacraments and had to find other ways of taking Communion. This found its way into the 1989 Anglican Church of Southern Africa Prayer Book as a help to others who could not receive.

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me. May your body and blood be my food and drink. May your passion and death be my strength and life. Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given. May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross. Let me not run from the love which you offer but hold me safe from the forces of evil. On each of my dyings shed your light and your love. Keep calling to me until that day comes when, with your saints, I may praise you forever. Amen.

A Blessing for Easter

The world is now too dangerous
And too beautiful for anything but love
May your eyes be so blessed you see God in everyone
Your ears, so you hear the cry of the poor.
May your hand be so blessed
That everything you touch is a sacrament.
Your lips, so you speak nothing but the truth with love.
May your feet be so blessed you run
To those who need you.
And may your heart be so opened,
So set on fire, that your love,
Your love changes everything. *Amen.*

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Yours in Christ,
Dave+

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