

EASTER SUNDAY, YEAR C, APRIL 17, 2022

In a cemetery in Hanover, Germany, there is a grave on which huge slabs of granite and marble were cemented together and fastened with heavy steel clasps. It belongs to a woman who did not believe in the resurrection. Yet strangely, she directed in her will that her grave be made so secure that if there were a resurrection, it could never reach her. On the marker were inscribed these words: "This burial place must never be opened."

Well, in time, a seed, covered over by the stones, began to grow. Slowly it pushed its way through the soil and out from beneath the stones. As the seed grew it turned into a tree and as the trunk enlarged, the great slabs were gradually shifted so that the steel clasps were wrenched from their sockets. In God's wonderful sense of humor a tiny seed had become a tree that had pushed aside the stones of the woman's grave who so desperately wanted to keep God away. The dynamic life force contained in that little seed is a faint reflection of the tremendous power of God's creativity. It is a faint reflection of the power of the resurrection.

Today we embrace the majesty and the mystery of our faith - the resurrection. We say this is the day which God has made--we rejoice and are glad in it! It's a great day to be alive--to be in vivo--in life!

However, how do we make Easter not just one Sunday to celebrate but rather a truth to live all year long. The great Easter truth is that we are to be alive here and now by the power of the resurrection." But "here and now" is sometimes easier said than done because it is a whole lot easier to settle for celebrating the resurrection one day a year rather than it is to figure out how to participate in it on a daily basis.

The evidence for the resurrection is all around us. Not in some ancient text or a DNA sample. Rather, the historical evidence for the resurrection is Jesus living in us; it is the transformative power of the Holy Spirit that invaded and ripped apart the lives of a bunch of uneducated common laborers and some women who were the lowest in society who believed in every fiber of their being and soul that God had done something new in the person of Jesus and they risked their very lives to spread that power and love of God that has come down to everyone of us sitting here this morning. The evidence of the resurrection is bringing back to life that which was dead – our hearts, our souls and our minds. Resurrection isn't an event rather it has to be lived. It has to be experienced, modeled and mentored. We are the evidence of the resurrection.

A sign in an Irish pub said: "St. Patrick's Day: One day a year to celebrate; 364 days to practice." It's kind of that way with Easter. The resurrection of Jesus is not simply a past event. And it is not simply a future hope awaiting us on the other side of death. Rather resurrection is happening right now and it keeps on happening when we practice it in our daily living. Our calling as Christians, as followers of Jesus, is to recognize the possibility of resurrection and to practice resurrection.

How do we practice resurrection in our daily lives? First, we can give attention to resurrection going on around us. Recognize the renewal of life in our midst. Notice the spiritual power in people and places and growing things, notice the beauty in nature. These are signs of rebirth.

But more importantly, we practice resurrection when we open our hearts and minds and souls to the pain in the world. For any of us who have loved and lost, and there isn't

a person here this morning who hasn't experienced some sort of loss, we know what it is like when others have compassion for us. When we are attentive to those in need, we help bring those who suffer back into the land of the living. That is resurrection.

When we regularly pray for others this is a caring presence which is a way of practicing resurrection. When we forgive another and are making it possible to begin anew and creating the possibility of new life we are practicing resurrection. When we are able to live with confidence even amidst doubt and when we can trust in God even in troubled times, all kinds of rebirths are possible.

When we can laugh and sing and enjoy life, even relish life, we are practicing resurrection. When we add even a small amount of joy to others, we are bringing resurrection into our community.

Working for justice and freedom and equality, working against oppression and injustice and prejudice of all kinds, and God's truth, not ours, are ways of putting death in its place. When we do this, we are setting the stage for resurrection. When we work together with others to make the world a better place, we are practicing resurrection. All actions that are life-affirming and life-giving are ways of practicing resurrection.

When we bring hope to someone in despair, when we bring healing to those who are in conflict, when we bring a touch of grace to those who need it, we are contributing to resurrection.

Practicing resurrection also means having confidence that God can make something out of our selfishness, our anger, our greed, our limitations. When we trust in God to take our lives and use our lives for good, we are practicing resurrection. Nadia Bolz Weber, a Lutheran Pastor and founder of the House for all Sinners and Saints describes resurrection this way: "God simply keeps reaching down into the dirt of our humanity and resurrecting us from the graves we dig for ourselves through our violence, our lies, our selfishness, our arrogance, and our addictions. And God keeps loving us back to life over and over."

When we live out our identity as children of God, people of worth, created in God's image, called to God's mission, we are living out resurrection. On a day as important and as powerful as Easter, it is not the literal Truth of the doctrine of the resurrection we seek, but the living truth that can undergird our lives so we can practice and live resurrection.

In the end, evil does not have the final word, because we are Easter people. As long as we practice resurrection daily and live as Easter people who believe in God's love and hope evil will never ever have the last word. Look around for when we live as Easter people we never know where the risen Christ will turn up next.

Easter tells us that there is far more to life than what we can see with our eyes. There is a reality greater than what we can prove through neat formulas. Easter reminds us that even in the darkness, God is there. It assures us that nothing in the universe is stronger than God's love and that in the end, God's love, always wins.

So my friends, the power of Easter is not so much that we will be restored but that we will be transformed. The power of Easter does not deny the reality of death and despair but it does say that these things do not have the last word. Easter tell us to let our imaginations and our spirits soar with the news that the world can be reborn into hope and possibility. We are Easter people and the power of Easter says that God is the last word. **Resurrection cannot be proved, it can only be lived. It is like the Franciscan blessing that says:** May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you really

can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done. That is practicing resurrection.

May each of us this morning see and feel and taste the power of the resurrection. Let Christ be resurrected in us. Let us make Easter possible. Be Easter People by practicing resurrection. Alleluia, Christ is Risen. The Lord is risen indeed! Amen.