

April 28, 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On the Sunday (such as this one) following the great Easter celebration, we come close to experiencing what the first disciples must have lived. Though Jesus died, in three days he'd risen from the grave and appeared to them. The crowds, friendly or not, the soldiers, and the wider circle of disciples were, for a time, absent. Now, only the few disciples (in their case, eleven, and in ours, let's just say the crowd has thinned a bit.)

What we notice right away is that those who gather this day bring a mix of thoughts, questions, and emotions. Hopeful. Drawn to be present. Longing to understand yet uncertain, waiting for more. St John's description (John 20:19-31) reveals the disciples in no little disarray in the aftermath of the first Easter morning.

Such mixtures of life experience are not unlike what we bring to this day. Life is in that very setting, Jesus comes and infuses them with Spirit. He comes to us that way, too, through baptism, through word spoken and sung, through the meal shared, through the sending out into life, strengthened and nourished to be God's people in the world. Jesus comes and reveals his "aliveness" to and through those first eleven. Then, like some uncontrollable chemical reaction, the new reality begins. The fission of that first Easter, and the second, crash into and around Jerusalem. Despite opposition and trouble, the unstoppable reaction moves on to all the Middle East, Europe, and across continents and centuries, around the globe, to the twenty first. Resurrection is relentless.

Jesus lives! We carry God's love and its infinite possibilities, its charge and promise and limitless welcome and against all odds strength into every setting and need. The repercussions of that Easter event, that love indefatigably active in the world, are found across in and through people of every time and place. Fort Wayne,

IN. Sri Lanka. Paris, France. God's resurrecting work goes on. Bringing life from death. Changing world.

Today is also the day of St Catherine of Siena, a young woman whose life in the 14th century was all against the odds. The 23rd child of a cloth dyer and home maker in the city of Siena in Tuscany, Italy, she was illiterate until adulthood and by her own admission a person of peculiar sensibilities. Nevertheless, she went on to change the course of history within and beyond church and community. She counseled and cared for Popes, ordinary folk and rich and famous personages of her era. She understood that the risen Lord shaped her life and service and, as a result, she sought a life of great purpose and lasting effect. Though she died at age 33, God's work in and through her life with Jesus in this world is undeniable.

So, here we are on the Second Sunday of Easter, gathered for gospel in worship or in our homes, still among those to whom the Risen Lord appears with love and presence and Spirit. Maybe with the "doubting" disciple, Thomas, Christ appears to us through others and we reply with our version of Thomas' "my Lord and my God!" to that reality. Perhaps ours is a certain conviction like Catherine of Siena's, that Jesus Christ lives and dwells within us, setting us to work right now for the sake of his church and people. Or, we might still be feeling our way this day, reaching out for "proof" or conviction of Jesus' risen reality. Wherever we are, His Spirit is at work in us, through us, for us, calling upon the hope that is (however still or small) within us on this "after" Sunday in the Easter season, he speaks to us in words of life. The Risen One brings new shape and purpose to our lives and hearts...and we are commissioned to live in those gifts for all the world. Like the first eleven disciples, we are loved, blessed and sent in the Risen Jesus' name. This very day, he is transforming the world and us through Easter's Good News.

Living the Resurrection with you, Pastor Haller