

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER MEDITATION APRIL 19, 2020

Dear Friends,

If you were deeply touched by a resurrection moment on Easter or throughout this week, then you might have been reminded that in this time of pandemic, the risen Christ continues to transform us in such moments that encourage us, raise us up, call us to action, or nourish our souls.

With so many in the midst of some kind of loss, we can be tempted to leave God out of our lives replaced by whatever distractions, angry skirmishes, escapes and mindlessness we might practice. Whatever cross we bear, keep in mind our Christ Jesus shows us that the cross through sin and death is love.

The way to prepare for the troubles and challenges we face is to slow down and learn how to confront and encounter such trials daily. When we say that we take up our cross daily, we mean that we are choosing to take love and to take the risen Christ with us in our troubles and reach for resurrection moments that strengthen us for our life's journey.

Faithfully, Beverly+

PRAYER

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

(Book of Common Prayer, p. 216).

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER PATHWAYS APRIL 19, 2020

Lessons of the Day: Acts 2:14a,22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31.

This week I want to share part of The Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde's Writing on April 16, 2020 as posted on the EDOW Web Site where you can read the complete sermon.

RESURRECTION FAITH IN CHALLENGING TIMES: EASTER MOMENTS

Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road?
Luke 24:32

I can't say that all Christians had such an experience this year; nor are they exclusive to Christians. But if you had such a moment, I hope you can trust it as the gift it was meant to be for you. It's consistent with what Jesus' disciples experienced, according to biblical stories sometimes called "the resurrection appearances." There are nine stories of Jesus appearing to his disciples after rising from the dead, all brief, mysterious, and reassuring.

The resurrection appearances could just as easily be called "resurrection moments." For in each, there is a moment when the disciples realize the person they are speaking with on the road, or who is cooking them breakfast, or has suddenly appeared among them behind locked doors, is Jesus. In one appearance he speaks a word of peace. In another, he speaks of hope. In others, he offers the reassurance of forgiveness and his unconditional love. Then he disappears. Like for us, nothing in the disciples' circumstances changes after each moment, but something inside them changes. They receive his peace, his hope, his forgiveness and his love.

For the first disciples and for us, resurrection moments come and go, and life resumes seemingly unchanged. Even the most seasoned of Christians can wonder if they were real or what difference they make. That's where faith comes in, in the sense of where we place our trust. Dare we trust those fleeting moments enough to be the guiding principle of our lives?

The Christian writer Cynthia Bourgeault, quoted this week by Richard Rohr, distinguishes between two kinds of hope: hope that is tied to outcome, an optimistic feeling that things will get better in the future, and what she calls "mystical hope" that seems to have a life of its own. Mystical hope isn't tied to outcomes, she writes, but rather to a sense of abiding presence. We aren't the source of that hope, but it is experienced within us, and it's meant to sustain us through challenging times.

Abiding, mystical hope is what Jesus gives us in a resurrection, so that we might live from its strength. "It's not something that will change your life in the short range, in the externals," writes Richard Rohr. "Rather, it is something that will change your innermost way of seeing. From there, inevitably, the externals will rearrange."

If Scripture is to be trusted, we will have more resurrection appearances, or moments, in the days to come--glimpses of reassurance, gifts of encouragement, and peace surpassing human understanding--in the midst of this heartbreaking time. Jesus' presence and power can move through locked doors and touch our anxious, doubting hearts. He invites us to trust him, to believe in him, and to draw strength from his abiding presence. As we do, more of that mystical hope directs our living. Then we might become--through a word, a gesture, or a sacrificial act of love--carriers of a resurrection moment for others, an expression of the same abiding presence that keeps us going when we need it most.

Author: The Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde