

Sermon – Capt. The Rev. Michael Hackbusch, Padre

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!!

Easter is upon us and today with our ancestors of the faith, those saints of old, we gather now for over 2000 years on this Sunday morning, in defiance of death having the final word, and sing/praise and celebrate that Christ is alive! The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it!!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Whew...

The journey of Lent's 40 days I know was sometimes bleak:

- Still in the midst of a pandemic:
 - Fear/possible illness(flinching at every cough or sneeze)
 - Colour coded municipalities
 - Travel restrictions
 - Lock down
 - Isolation and loneliness
 - Mental health issues and crisis
 - School by computer/Zoom meetings/MS Teams
 - Sitting (the new smoking)
 - Death
- The usual Lenten meditations:
 - Die to the “old self’s” influences that distract us from God and our neighbour;
 - Die to selfish ways;
 - Discern how to be better aware of the plight of our neighbours local or global;
 - Die to the influences of racism and prejudice
- Or, perhaps this Lent we found new ways of doing community:
 - Cultivating our sense of Prayer:
 - either mid week with “Covid-19 rules” in place (masks and distancing”), or online communities that no longer feel like an oxymoron, Online (individuals)/Communities (collectives)!

- Adding a walk for intentional self care and mindfulness;
- Paying attention to those myriad of things we seldom even notice or take for granted: birds/buds/...spouses... (lol)

Lent is now over and Easter has arrived.

The Reading from Isaiah is one you may well recognize. It's used often at funerals in my experience. One might think it odd that we would read a "funeral reading" at Easter. It seems at first blush counter intuitive.

It is great for funerals to hear Isaiah's vision where, "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." It's a great vision, to be sure! Continuing on, Isaiah says, "the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces. He will swallow up death, forever." Even and especially for those who mourn (Again, a great funeral reading is it not?!)

As I considered these thoughts in preparation for today I realized that that's backward thinking is it not; to think that we'd be reading a funeral reading for Easter?

Christian funerals are in fact 'Celebrations of the Resurrection'. At funerals we celebrate the resurrection of Christ – that is, Easter – and in doing so we commemorate the lives of our loved ones and neighbours. At funerals then we are having family reunion with the risen Christ as our host – sharing tears, sharing stories, getting perhaps angry, perhaps even laughing. Yet in the end we are celebrating a new beginning in how we will live a new life in the absence of one we knew and I hope, confident in the reality of new life in Christ.

A pros pos then that at Easter we are celebrating the resurrection with the resurrected Christ as our host. We have laid to rest our "old-self" having worked through our Lenten disciplines (our "old-self's" dying) only today to be with Christ reborn. The annual do-over that is all Christ's doing for us as a gift!

It is as New people that we are gathered here despite our ongoing fears. We gather defiant of the world's NO and so stand with Christ and God's YES! Yes to Jesus. Yes to Jesus' life and ministry. Yes to our new life (Baptism) and ministry(service): Love your God with all your heart soul mind and strength, and your neighbour as yourself. (Here we can properly apply the Covid-19 rules!! We demonstrate our love of neighbour by:

- distancing,
- frequent hand washing,
- wearing a mask, and
- limiting our travel....

and all the while we still live abundant lives, resurrected lives. Different than the old normal to be sure, but we are living new lives today!

So sing songs of joy! (even if only in your head!)

Give words of encouragement! (even if muffled by a mask)

Journey along side one another especially during our "times of trial" (albeit at a good 2 meters apart)!

Christ is alive. Christ is in you!

Live into this reality, this free gift – new and reborn!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!!!