

“As the Day Was Dawning”

The Resurrection of Our Lord

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Our Gospel reading for this day comes from Matthew chapter 28, verses 1 through 10:

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

This is the Gospel of our Lord.

“Thanks be to God.”

“As the first day of the week was dawning ...”

What an important image for us to hear on this day, at this time!

“As the day was dawning.”

It is that time between night and daylight,
as light breaks forth upon the earth after an evening’s slumber.

It is a time of new possibilities,
of hope,
of what might be;
leaving behind the day that was,
and moving into a new day.

“As the day was dawning” is like that liminal moment often spoken about.

It is a “threshold,”

that time of hope and promise.

It feels like we are living somewhere between night and day right now.
We are living in this time of in-between,
wondering what the future will hold,

thinking back to what life was like just a few weeks ago,
and pondering what life might be as we move beyond this time in which we now
live.

“As the day was dawning.”

I am delighted that I am able to be with you in this way, on this special day of the Resurrection of Our
Lord.

Now that we are not able to meet in our places of worship, I commend you, our pastors
and congregations, for exploring how to continue to worship together in new and
alternative ways.

In just a few short weeks, you all have been exploring how to stay connected
even while you are physically distancing.

You are learning how to record or stream your worship services,
and you are sharing these links with others, so that those who are unable
to produce their own on-line worship services are still able to participate
in worship across our synod and across our church.

This technology is a gift for us right now,
for it brings us together as the Body of Christ in a unique way.

We long for that time when we will be able to worship together again face-to-face.

But for now, we demonstrate our love and care for our neighbour and our communities
by practicing physical distancing.

These measures likely will be needed for some time to come.
But we will do our part as churches, caring for our communities.

In a world seemingly upside-down,
where nothing is ordinary anymore,
I hear stories of how you are connecting in new ways,
figuring out how to be community
and how to be “neighbour.”

I have heard story after story of how you are trying to maintain contact with each other,
through phone calls and zoom meetings, recorded worship services and bible studies.
You are being so very creative in navigating the challenges before us.

It also is so important that you continue with your prayers:
for each other, yes;
for your neighbours, communities, our province and country, for all the nations
of the world, yes;

but especially let us pray for those most vulnerable at this time,
those living on the streets,
those in shelters,
those without a safe place to be.

And let us pray as well for all those emergency and health care workers who are working so diligently, compassionately, and selflessly,
as they serve us and our communities,
knowing that they themselves are at increased risk.

These are challenging times.
But we will continue to be the people of God,
living in hope and promise,
living in this liminal time of “as the day was dawning.”

We **are** an Easter people,
living in trust and hope.

Even in the midst of fear and deep concern,
we live in the assurance and promise of one who abides with us,
journeys with us — in all things.

We are an Easter people.
And being Easter people, we give of ourselves for the neighbour.
As Jesus was always seeking, reaching out, moving beyond the boundaries, demonstrating selfless love, so we, too, seek to be “embodied love.”

“As the day was dawning.”

Suddenly, there was an earthquake;
then an angel — messenger of God — appeared,
rolling back the stone;
appearance like lightning,
clothing white as snow.

This is cosmic language:
all earth groans, waiting for the new day dawning.

And the messenger’s first words:
“Do not be afraid.”

Yeah, right!! You just witnessed an earthquake, saw an angel descending before you and rolling away a heavy stone, and you’re going to say, “Yah. I’m good. No worries. I see this all the time.”

Do not be afraid.
What an understatement!

I forget which biblical commentator once said it, but he pointed out that in Scripture, whenever an angel says “Do not be afraid,” you should be very afraid!
Because something new, something incredibly new and big and large and earth-shaking is about to take place.

And you are going to be in the midst of it.

“A new day was dawning.”

Then the words from the messenger: "Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples."

Did you catch the verbs?
"Come. See. Go. Tell."

Come and see.
Bear witness to what you see.
Or better yet, bear witness to what you do not see.
You do not see the body lying in the tomb.
He is not there. He is gone.

"Come and see."

And then, "Go. Go quickly and tell the disciples."
They're in the upper room, hiding out.
They are not here with you, the women.

They are in the upper room,
hiding,
afraid,
doors are barred.
locked into yesterday.

They are afraid;
afraid of the Roman authorities,
afraid of what might happen to them.
afraid that today will be no different from yesterday.

They are afraid that a new dawn cannot possibly come.

Right now, it might feel to you like we are living in an upper room:
unsure,
waiting,
wondering,
living with the unknown,
experiencing fear of the other.

Granted, there is a big difference in this.
We are all physically distancing out of LOVE for the neighbour.
We are remaining behind closed doors in order to practice care of each other.

But the sense of being alone,
of being afraid,
uncertain,
at times overwhelmed,
is palpable and it is real.

And we wait for a new day to dawn for our selves, our
communities, our country, the world.

The women heed the angel's voice.
Having seen the place where Jesus was lain, they now Go.

They run with fear and joy — the two emotions are almost one and the same,
in that moment.

But suddenly,
Jesus meets them;
meets them in their fear,
meets them in their hesitant joy,
meets them on the way.

Meets them where they are,
meets them in that space between fear and hope.

And then, these words, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."
These are the same words that the angel said to the women: "He has gone ahead of you to Galilee."

What does this mean?
What does Galilee represent for us?

He has gone ahead of you to Galilee, back to where it all began;
back home;
come full circle,
ready to start anew,
ready to start renewed.

Galilee is where you're from.
Galilee is your context,
your lived experience.

And into your Galilee, the risen Christ will meet you.
In your Galilee, new life lives.

"He is going ahead of you to Galilee."

He is ahead of you in Kelowna and Port Alberni,
in Dawson Creek and Vancouver,
in Nelson and Prince Rupert,
and in all the places in between.

Wherever it is you are from: Christ is **there**.
He has gone ahead of you.

He is not here; not in the tomb.
He is out there, in your world.

I believe that is what Jesus is saying to us:
Christ in the everyday.
Christ in our lives, every day.

Mary and the other women came to the tomb early that morning searching for Jesus.
But they were not searching for Jesus in the present, only in the past.
They were blinded by tears of regret, disappointment, grief and fear.

In the same way, the other disciples were locked away in an upper room.
They also were looking for, expecting, Jesus in the past.

Meanwhile, the resurrected Jesus is not in the tomb where we expect to
find him.

He is out there — out there in our everyday lives.

On Easter, we often think of trumpets sounding and Christ ascended into heaven:
the transcendent Christ.

We use language of “up, above, overhead.”
We take on the posture of looking up, raising our eyes to the heavens.

But then we hear the messenger say, “He has gone ahead of you to Galilee.”
And we change our posture.
We change our view,
and we see Christ here, among us, beside us, in us.

The transcendent Christ is also the imminent Christ;
the one above is also the one here.

Christ in the everyday world.
Christ in my world.
Christ in your world.

“A new day was dawning.”

These are words of hope,
life,
newness,
and promise:
the incarnate Christ;
Christ enfleshed among us.

These are words for a world unsure of tomorrow;
words for this in-between time of uncertainty and fear.

Christ in our midst.
Love embodied.
Hope for tomorrow.

May the peace of Christ be with you all. **Amen.**