



Monday Morning Christians: Practicing Resurrection

Easter 2A 4/19/20

The Rev. Nick Morris-Kliment

Christ Church, Needham, MA

*Oh Lord: May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be always acceptable in your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

Welcome back! I'm so glad you are here this morning, that you have made the decision to get out of bed, perhaps even get out of your pajamas, and join with other Christians to worship this morning.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen. The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

You may remember that last Sunday, dressed in our Easter finest (or maybe not!), many of us came to church by watching on our computers or listening in on Zoom.

Many of us felt God's presence mightily in the lovingly knit together garment of prayer and praise, music and song, Word and Sacrament offered from the sacred spaces of Christ Church and the homes of lectors, intercessors, and musicians from Norwood to Salem, from Needham to Dedham, from Waltham to Middleboro. We gathered for worship from Sarasota to Tucson, from Needham to Brattleboro, from Dedham to Cambridge, England.

We felt burdens lifted, at least for a while;  
We gained hope for the future, at least for a moment;  
We felt some healing, at least temporarily;  
We felt reconnected with God, some way, somehow.  
We felt wonder that this could even happen at all!

In some way, the Resurrection was real to us—maybe as a historical fact; maybe as a renewal of our faith; maybe as a sense of being reconnected to Jesus Christ, to the community of the faithful, our friends.

And then...

Monday morning came. And Tuesday. And Wednesday.

The guidelines for social distancing still in effect. Cases and deaths from COVID-19 still rising in the Commonwealth. Decisions about what news to pay attention to. Schools, Senior Centers, Starbucks, still closed. Jobs uncertain, in jeopardy, lost. Future uncertain. Political gamesmanship. Loved ones still sick or dying or dead, still alone. Bill still to be paid. Tight family quarters and chores still to be negotiated. Children, parents, spouses and other strenuous relationships to be tended to, either too close for comfort, or too far to comfort. Unexpected gifts of time and intimacy with friends and family and co-workers to be discovered,



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savored and nurtured. My experience of this time has been that it intensifies whatever dynamics may already be at work in our lives. And Yesterday.... SNOW!?

In short, business as usual in what has become the new normal, which still feels anything but.

But in the Scripture we hear today, we are reminded that, for the first disciples, the Resurrection meant just the *opposite* of business as usual.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles this morning, tells the story.

The fearful, unreliable, rag-tag band of disciples seems to turn into a group of preachers and teachers. They are not cowed by jail, or police, or religious authorities. They are so changed by their experience of Jesus after his death, they can not longer remain silent about his power, even when faced with persecution.

As Peter would explode if he did not declare, “This Jesus, God raised up! And of that, all of us are witnesses!”.

And yet, as we hear the Gospel reading this morning, we may stand with Thomas, who needs a certain kind of proof, before he can trust that Jesus and his power remain alive.

For the record I should also say that I have come to trust in a physical, historical Resurrection, that Jesus came back to life in a new kind of body. I don't understand why you and I can't see him in that body right now. That's a mystery to me.

Yet I also know just enough about modern physics to know that what we think we understand about how the physical world works is not always the way things actually are. For example, I'm told that physics tells us that there is more space than matter in the wood of this music stand. And just because science can't replicate it, doesn't mean it couldn't have happened. I also know enough about history that the Resurrection is about as well attested to as other events in the ancient world that modern people accept as fact. History by definition is the study of things that only happen once. Wherever you are on this question is completely ok. In the interest of full disclosure, you should know where your preacher stands.

But many of us lack the certainty, the immediacy, of the Presence of the Resurrected Christ that we yearn for. I know that I often do.

Sometime back, I read a short excerpt from a book called *Practicing Resurrection* by Nora Gallagher. The author describes a friend's experience in Church during the Advent season.



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The preacher asked what the friend thought was kind of a silly question: “What would you like for Christmas?”. After thinking about it, the friend decided she wanted to stand up and shout back to the preacher—“I’d really like to believe in the Resurrection!”

It’s a big question for many of us—where is the power of God for me?

In a significant way, we practice Resurrection every Sunday, whether we realize it or not. Simply by gathering here, right now, in front of our computer or by our phone, whether we feel like being here or not, and when we could easily, easily, have slept in, watched another funny pet GIF, or read the paper, we offer ourselves to the Resurrected Jesus—who is present here in the community, in the songs and silence, in the prayers and scripture, perhaps even in this homily, surely in the fellowship, in the outreach to one another. When we show up, like Thomas does, we place ourselves in the position to experience Jesus.

Like Thomas, we keep gathering with other people who believe, or want to believe, or have decided, at least for today, to live like they believe, to live like we have been witnesses to Resurrection, so that we may offer Resurrection life to others.

As the line in the Nicene Creed puts it: We look for the Resurrection of dead. Being here, now, is a start.

But Practicing Resurrection only *starts* on Sundays. How do we keep it going the rest of the week, in such a way that we can say with the Psalmist "You are my Lord, my good above all other." ?

A number of Lents ago, I had the wonderful experience of spending some Wednesday evenings with a number of Christ Church families. We gathered in the evening for a simple meal, then Bible study and prayer on a particular theme, which we would then try to put into practice during the week. One of our themes was “watch.” Our job was to practice “God sightings”—places where we saw or heard or felt holiness breaking through our ordinary days, and then to report back to the group. People spoke about the breeze in their faces while running, the love of a parent, the glint of sunlight at a certain angle in their office, the love of a pet, the kindness of a friend.... All of these and more were signs of God’s presence. I think that this is practicing Resurrection.

Recently, I have been helped to practice Resurrection by the faithful participants in the morning prayer conference call sponsored each weekday by our Cathedral at 8.30am, Monday through Friday. I’m not too proud to say that sometimes, this is what gets me out of bed in the morning.



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We can practice Resurrection by contributing what we can to help people in our lives who are in desperate straits during this time of separation and economic slowdown. For example, the MANNA community at our Cathedral is one of the few places that is providing food, water, and shelter for the unhoused in Boston. Our own Jennifer McCracken is on the front lines ministering to their needs. A contribution sent to the Cathedral in any amount, marked MANNA ministry, is practicing Resurrection.

The ministries that are continuing in this congregation is practicing Resurrection.

The health professionals throughout our country and around the world that are saving lives is practicing Resurrection.

The unseen men and women who are delivering packages is practicing Resurrection.

I could go on. All of the experiences that we see, hear, and read about in our lives—to focus on those is practicing Resurrection.

When we love Jesus in the face of the “other” in our circumstances, we are practicing Resurrection. We make him real. We are not conjuring him, he is here. But we need practice to see him. It’s like that thing we used to do when we were young, making ink out of lemon juice and writing secret messages. When we apply the light to the page, the writing becomes clear. When we apply the love of God to our neighbor, the Resurrection of Jesus becomes real.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!