



Easter Sunday April 12, 2020
The Rev. Nick Morris-Kliment
Christ Church, Needham, MA

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

It is a joy and a delight to welcome all of you to worship today, even as we come together in a completely, totally, and unexpectedly different way.

Things are so out of sync these days that I've been thinking back to Christmas.

I'm thinking back to one of my all-time favorite Christmas cartoons.

I'm thinking of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

You remember the story.

The Grinch thinks he can keep Christmas from coming to the citizens of Whoville if he takes all their stockings...

and "pop guns, pampoogas, pantookas, and drums!
Checkerboards, bizilbigs, popcorn, and plums!"

And you remember that he cleaned out that icebox as "quick as a flash.

And he took the last can of Who hash!"

And he packed up his sled,

"Packed it up with their presents, their ribbons, their wrappings,
Their snoof and their fuzzles, their tringlers and trappings!"

And you know the rest...

"Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,
Was singing without any presents at all!

He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!"

And so it is with us and this blasted virus.

Of course, I don't believe that the virus set out to deprive of us our common life together as Christians and as citizens of the world, or to keep us from celebrating the Resurrection.

And yet, the pandemic has upended everything about our lives as people of faith and members of the human family.

We're not leaving our houses except for the most essential activities.



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We're not hanging out in person with friends and extended family.

We may be worried sick about the future, about loved ones we can't be with, about our jobs, our retirement account, about the elections, about the progress of the disease around our town, country, and the world, and so many other things that eat away at our sense of well-being and serenity.

We're not here together wearing our Easter best, or even whatever clothes were close at hand when we got out of bed in the morning.

We're not seeing old friends and acquaintances as well as new faces in the neighboring pew.

We're not breathing deeply of the aroma of lilies and candlewax as we come to the rail for Communion and rest in the beauty of song and music and prayer.

We're not receiving the Eucharist, at the center of our worship life, where Jesus makes himself particularly known to us.

We're not getting ready to have an Easter feast either at home at a restaurant with a big crowd, (though we may be ordering from the Mandarin or Dragon Chef...)

And still-coronavirus hasn't stopped Easter from coming. Somehow or other it comes! Because Easter began happening nearly 2000 years ago on the side of that hill outside of Jerusalem.

We're learning that nothing can stop the power of God to create, to innovate, to bring forth a new thing in the face of death.

What we are finding is the reminder that in the face of all these troubles and challenges, God has the last word, and that word is: *Love wins*. We rejoice in that truth. I take that phrase from Rob Bell who wrote a book by the same name, *Love Wins*— not a virus, not a tanking economy, not rising unemployment, not political chaos here or abroad, not disease, not gun violence, not addictions, *not even death*. But Love. Wins.

This is the proclamation against those places in our lives and in the world, where death and sorrow and regret and fear take up residence and seem to win the day. The proclamation is that *Jesus is raised*. *Love wins*.

But it's hard to hear that proclamation in a world that is full of so many things that rightly provoke worry, especially now. Partly it is hard to hear, because, as science tells us, our God-given brains are in some sense hardwired to latch on to news that portends danger, from the time when our ancestors needed to keep track of deadly predators and other threats to our very survival.



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The women featured in our Gospel this morning know that primal fear. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (and other women not mentioned here but mentioned in the other Gospels) had followed Jesus some 70 miles from their native Galilee over rugged terrain to Jerusalem.

They had witnessed healings, teachings, miraculous feedings, as vulnerable members of society which gave them very few rights.

They were women traveling without male partners, and with little security apart from those male members of their families.

And they had just witnessed, two days before, the brutal execution of Jesus and the two thieves beside him. These executions were fairly standard practice by the Roman overlords who ruled Judea, warnings to those who would challenge the authority of Rome. These women knew about danger and fear and powerlessness.

And they get to the tomb expecting to find a dead friend, prepared to anoint him for burial in the best Jewish tradition.

And what do they find? An earthquake, an empty tomb, some guards comatose with fear, and an angel in a blinding white tuxedo. His first word is “Do not be afraid!” And then, “He has been raised, as he said!” And then, “Go quickly and tell.”

And in fear and great joy, they run to tell the other disciples.

And as they run, suddenly, Jesus meets them and greets them.

“Do Not Be afraid,” he says, “and go tell the others that they will see me.”

Where are you seeing him?

Here’s where I am seeing him; here’s where I see that he has been raised:

In the silent and unassuming service of those who check us out of grocery stores and restock the shelves; in the regular delivery of our mail; in the work of pharmacists and drug store clerks; in the compassionate care from nursing home workers and home health aides; in the courageous and skilled work of doctors, nurses, emergency department staff, and other medical professionals on the front lines in clinical care, and in the hospital administrators coordinating and supporting those clinical workers; in first responders; in those who carefully and respectfully bring the bodies of those who have died to makeshift morgues and funeral homes; in the steady hum of fulfillment centers where stretched workers keep the economy going; in bankers working to get money to small businesses; in the fleets of delivery trucks and Grub Hub drivers; in the growing gestures of neighborliness; in the recovery of family time; in those who faithfully attend to the needs of the homeless; in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York which has made its nave into a hospital; in *our* Cathedral in Boston, which continues to



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make itself a respite for those who have no home; in the heartbreaking yearning to be with those who are nearing death; in all these situations and countless others, He has been raised, and is alive, “as he said.”

Where are you seeing Him?

We know seeing can be hard. We know that being the hands and hearts of the Jesus is hard. We can't do it alone. And so, we continue to gather day-by-day, week after week, by zoom and phone and Facebook and text, to pray and worship and encourage and remind one another: He has been raised! And we tell others by our loving actions.

The mysterious power of the Risen Christ is ultimately bigger than all that we face. *And this will pass.* As if in an eternal game of whack-a-mole, the Resurrected One and his loving and courageous power cannot be beaten down.

As Bishop Barbara Harris of blessed memory used to so powerfully say:
“The force that is behind us is more powerful than the obstacles ahead of us.”

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

(Recorded April 8, 2020)