

“Embracing the Resurrection”
Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11;
Mark 16:1-8

Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018
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Where is he? Where is Jesus? One place we often think about where he is—he’s in heaven! And yet, that doesn’t feel very close. He still feels pretty far away. Sometimes it’s something we have a hard time even conceptualizing. What does it mean for him to be in heaven?

We know that whenever we lose someone, we think of them as a witness to the resurrection, so we can think, indeed, he is still with us. His words are still with us. We’ve got the scriptures. And we know that because we have encountered him through those scriptures, he is, in a way, in our hearts as well.

But I think it goes a little further with the resurrection. At the very end of Matthew, he says, “I’ll be with you until the end of the age.” It doesn’t say, “I’m going to be sitting in heaven the whole time. I won’t be with you.” It says, “I am with you.” The resurrection is not Jesus going away; it’s Jesus coming to us in a new way.

I think one of the problems we have in finding him is because we sometimes look for him in the wrong place. The women were looking for him in the tomb. Where do we look for Jesus? Do we look for Jesus on the seats of power, or in success, or in might, or in the ability to make others do something we want them to do? In Matthew 25 he suggests there’s a place we will probably see him even if we don’t recognize him. He says, “When you do to one of the least of these, you do it to me.” He is among us, present with us.

And just as the women heard from the angel that day, he has gone ahead. He invites us not to simply hang out, look back, and wonder at what he has done. Sure, it’s wonderful and we get to remember and it’s an incredible thing, but it’s not over. As he tells the disciples, “He’s gone ahead of you to Galilee.” In another place he says, “I go ahead to prepare a room for you.” He’s gone ahead of us and we are to follow him, to begin to look at what’s ahead.

So often it feels to me like it’s so easy to look back and wonder why did this happen. How can I change it? How can I justify what has happened? What I realize is I can’t always justify what has happened, particularly when it’s something I’ve done. Oftentimes then I realize it’s simply a mistake. I notice my own sin, my own struggle. It is when I turn and begin to listen that I see what Jesus has done, how Jesus receives who I am, what I’ve done, all of me and invites me to look ahead, not to be stuck in the past, not to be stuck with my sin. He’ll take that. But he invites us to look ahead. He invites us into the dance, the dance of life.

Sometimes we can think about the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dancing together, a dynamic life of God. And we are invited into the life he has given

us—a life that is new and exciting and wonderful—not because of what I have done, but because of the very gift of grace God has given me. That’s what the resurrection is about. You see, when I just work on my own I begin to feel empty, and I struggle. But when I recognize what the empty tomb is about, it’s not about my empty life, but it’s about Jesus coming to fill our lives with the love and grace of God.

Sometimes I can feel pretty worthless, pretty empty. In fact, if I didn’t have the love of God in my life I don’t know where I’d be. It is this very love of God that’s seen in the resurrection, this invitation to new life, this recognition that death does not have the final word, that sin does not have the final word, and that we may live into the life God gives us. It’s so easy to get caught up in the world around us and the struggles of the world and worry about this or that. Look at all the negative, instead of being pulled, invited, led into the new life, into the positive, into the shalom of God, into the grace and goodness of God, into the Kingdom of God, into the family of faith. However you want to say it, it is about life and life together.

Not only does he invite us, he is willing to sustain us in that new covenant. It’s not just about an invitation, it’s about “I will be with you, I will feed you. I will bring you around the table. I will encourage you and guide you.” We won’t be on our own. We have one that lives and lives with us and calls us evermore into life.

You see, Jesus is not passive. He’s active. He’ll grab hold of us. Now, we have to decide what to do with that. He won’t hold on if we pull away. But if we do allow him to hold onto us, he will embrace us. He will embrace us and give us new life. He will invite us to live in the grace. He will invite us to live as resurrected people in spite of the world around us. We don’t have to listen to the negative talk of the world. We can live out the love and grace of God because we know that God has given that to us.

He invites us to embrace the resurrection, not his death. His death happened so that he could get rid of our sin, but he asks us to embrace his resurrection, embrace new life, his life, the life we are all called to, the life of grace, of goodness, of hope, of wonder, of beauty.

We know what God is about. We know what Jesus is about. It’s just that the world keeps telling us it’s wrong. I don’t care what the world says. I hear what God says. Resurrection is real. The hope is real. The grace is real, and it gives us life—life everlasting.

He is risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.