

Easter Year B 2012

One of my mentors in the Episcopal Church once said to me and others, "God knew how to get me to come to church." And then she would pause. "Ordain me." At the time I thought that was an odd thing for a priest to confess but I do understand. So here is a little Sunday humor for you.

The preacher was standing at the front door, shaking hands as his parishioners came out. He pulled one man aside and said, "You need to join the Army of the Lord, son!"

"I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor," he replied.

"Then how come" the pastor asked, "How come I only see you at Christmas and Easter?"

The parishioner replied, "Because I'm in His Secret Service!"

So starting next week we will begin a new policy called a no excuse Sunday policy.

* Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in."

* There will be a section with lounge chairs for those who feel our pews are too hard.

* We will have steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever came to church."

* Blankets will be provided for those who think, "The

church is too cold."

* Fans will be provided for those who think, "The church is too hot."

* Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present and not present.

* One section will have trees and grass for those who like to seek God in nature.

* And the sanctuary will be decorated with both poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who have never seen the church without them.

Today is our Festival Day a happy day a joyous day. Today is Easter, our day set aside to ponder the events of Jesus resurrection story. The Epistle in 1 Corinthians this morning "provides the earliest written reference to the Resurrection." The Apostle Paul "proclaims the good news that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and on the third day was raised from the dead. Jesus then appeared to a number of eyewitnesses" then to Paul himself, who proclaimed that his own calling derived from an experience of the Risen Lord."

At the heart of Paul's message is that resurrection is about living. Resurrection is not just something that happens after death but it's about something that begins to happen right now. The collect this morning bids us to die daily to sin, so that we may evermore live in the joy of the resurrection. Daily living, living in joy. Resurrection is about living.

A funny thing happened the last few times I've called my brother Dave on the telephone. He tells me that my caller ID comes up as Tori Easter. Jokingly last week I said to him, "gee I'll have to figure out how to work that into my Easter homily." A silly thought and stumped at first but then it came to me. Wouldn't it be nice, wouldn't it be fantastic, wouldn't it be incredibly wonderful if everyone we called saw a caller ID with the last name of Easter. Wouldn't it be awesome if every time we went to answer a phone call the caller ID revealed the message of Easter? The message that we can begin living resurrected lives right now. Resurrection is on the phone.

Wendell Berry, a farmer, writer, and an academic wrote this. He said, "Practice resurrection. Part of who you are is who you will be." And of course this is another way of asking, who do you want to be? What needs to be resurrected in your life so that you can begin to practice living resurrection right now?

Another message about resurrection comes from DeWayne Zimmerman. I don't know who he is but the only person under that name I could find on the internet is an American professional basketball player. I thought how cool. So I don't know but hope it is him. It would be nice to have such thinking come from folks that aren't theologians. But in the quote Zimmerman says this. "The message of the resurrection is not simply, 'don't be afraid to die.' Surly it is that. And all of us when we lose someone we love, or on our own day of dying[we]

will need the comfort of the resurrection. But I believe the message of Easter is not simply 'don't be afraid to die,' but 'don't be afraid to live.'"

This morning's reading from the Acts of the Apostles ends with these words. "...everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." In the Gospel we hear about Jesus' family and friends discovering that the stone which had imprisoned Jesus body in a tomb had been rolled away. Jesus was not there to be found. Jesus was free in the same way that he came with a message to free us from our tombs, both in living and in dying. You are forgiven was his message. You are forgiven be at peace. You are forgiven and free to live resurrected lives. Let no stone imagined or real be an obstruction to living in this forgiveness, in this peace, in this freedom.

Writer and theologian C. S. Lewis wrote this. "Aim at Heaven, and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither." Aiming at Heaven is the call of the resurrection. In the words of Mark's Gospel today, "the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." Sacred,Imperishable,and eternal.

Resurrection can begin now. We can let the Alleluia Easter message be the one to go out on our caller ID and then also we can be willing to receive the Easter message when it comes to us. We can ask what stones need to be rolled away so that we may forgive as we have been forgiven. That we may be at peace and not trapped in the darkened tomb of suffering and unhappiness.

You've probably heard the expression that possession is nine-tenths of the law. It's an expression meaning that ownership is easier to maintain if one has possession of something, and much more difficult to enforce if one does not. And we do have possession; we in every nation, from east to west, in life and in death possess the power of resurrection, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. It is now and it is forever.

I'll end on a note which comes from one of the television shows I watch, *The Vampire Diaries*. It's a modern day vampire drama but stories about such creatures have been around for a long time, recorded in many cultures going back to prehistoric times. Undead beings that still need the life blood of the living. This quote from the *Vampire Diaries* is spoken by a mother brought back to life into the modern day of her vampire family. I know that sounds kind of stupid but listen to what she says. She says, "It's been my dream for 1000 years that this family could be as one. Forgiveness is not a chore it's a gift."

Resurrection really does begin with forgiveness. It is the message of the Kingdom of God which Jesus embodied. It has been God's dream for who knows how long that the human family could be as one. Forgiveness is not a chore it's a gift. Resurrection is not possible without forgiveness. Life is not possible without forgiveness. Peace is not possible without forgiveness. Easter joy is not possible without forgiveness. Believing

in Jesus is not possible without believing in forgiveness.
Every day we live is a day to forgive. Amen.

Rocks and blessing over the water.