



Easter Day

Sermon by Ven Moses Thabethe



Sunday 17 April 2022

READINGS

Psalm 114; Romans 6:1-11; Luke 24: 1-12

Easter Vigil

Isn't it Good News that every Good Friday has an Easter Sunday? Today we are confronted with that Good News – we witness once more the power of the risen Christ at work in our lives. When we face the "empty tombs" of our lives: the losses and disappointments, heartbreaks and failures, tragic deaths and prolonged illnesses, loneliness and despair. Those tombs are our "Friday" lives, and Jesus shares them with us. But Jesus also shares Sunday, and resurrection, new life and new hope, with us. Part of the Good News is that it wasn't a one-time thing, the resurrection of Jesus. It was, instead, the dawning of a new day, and new life as well.

There is this little poem called "Anyway" written by a man named Kent Keith – a poem which, apparently, Mother Teresa had framed on her wall. It says:

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway!

The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway!

Honesty makes you vulnerable. Be honest anyway!

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway!

People really need help but may attack you if you help them. Help them anyway!

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Do good anyway!

When you look up the meaning of this inspiring little adverb, "anyway," in the dictionary, you discover it means: "nevertheless," "regardless,". The powers that be, killed Jesus, the sin of the world cut him down; nevertheless, God raised Him up. Hatred and fear and violence really reigned on Good Friday, but God had the last word, "anyway," on Sunday, because God loved the world too much to take away our hope or to bring to an end the beautiful new creation that God had promised long ago, through the prophets.

This isn't just about things that happened a long time ago and far away to people we'll never know and can't relate to, Isaiah and Mary Magdalene and Peter...no, this "anyway" happens all the time in our lives, too, right here and now. We know we all fall short of the glory of God, we fail – a lot – and God loves us anyway. We face loss and death and the brief glory of our living, of all our accomplishments and plans, and God promises us new life, healing and wholeness anyway. Our relationships crash and burn, our children worry us, there's never enough money, and God reassures us anyway, God offers us peace and

wholeness and reconciliation through the resurrection of Jesus! We turn away from God, and God offers us grace, anyway.

Isn't this really why we're here this Easter morning? Don't we come here with our problems and struggles, our fears and doubts hoping in our hearts to hear a Word, an "anyway" from the Lord? Doesn't that Word of God sustain us in hospital beds and waiting rooms alike, at gravesites and in the longest night of deep agony with a sick child, mother, father, daughter?

In our Gospel text of Luke this Easter Vigil we hear the story of the resurrection told again. And the truth is that no one expects resurrection and no one, quite frankly, believes it at first. This is true, across the gospels, and it is certainly apparent in Luke. The women come to the tomb expecting to anoint Jesus' dead body. That is, they have no expectation that he has been raised. In fact, only when they are reminded by the "two men in dazzling clothes," do they recall Jesus' promise that he would rise.

Energized by this encounter, they run back to tell the rest of the disciples ... who greet their story with utter skepticism. In fact, Luke says that the men who received the testimony of the women regarded their message as an "idle tale." Most of us have heard the story of resurrection so often it hardly makes us blink, let alone shake with wonder and surprise. Which is rather sad, when you think about it, because this promise, as difficult as it may be to believe initially, is huge, and when it sinks in and lays hold of you, absolutely everything looks a little different – the world and everything in it is transformed, it is filled with hope!

Each time we hope again, after having our hope smashed into pieces, we share in the resurrection. Each time we pick up the pieces, wipe our tears, face the sun, and start again, we share in the power of the resurrection. What we celebrate this evening is that Christ has conquered all, and that we too can conquer. Listen to Paul's words to the Romans in our second reading:

"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will live with him also." Romans 6: 3-5.

Over the centuries men and women have often observed that people need to be part of something bigger than themselves; nothing is greater than Christ and his work. Those around the world who will be baptized today, are indeed part of something far bigger than we can even imagine. Baptism is about repentance; about changing direction in one's life. Without the Holy Spirit, there can be no church so through baptism, God pours himself out for the benefit of the community of believers ... us!

That is why a common assurance of pardon is "Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation, the old life is gone, new life has begun." Peter told new Christians, "Repent, and be baptized ... and you will receive the Holy Spirit. So, it is the Good News that every Good Friday has an Easter. Jesus is alive and at work in our lives! Alleluia

Amen