**The Sunday of the Resurrection: Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, the Rev. David Ota**

**Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18**

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, alleluia! On the first Easter morning, most of the disciples were behind locked doors for fear that the authorities would arrest them, and they would suffer the same fate as Jesus, a sham trial followed by cruel execution by crucifixion. However, in our gospel account for today from John, Mary Magdalene came out to Jesus’ grave. She was driven by grief wanting to hold on to Jesus in his dead body. Perhaps she was not afraid of being arrested by the authorities because she was a woman. In the gospel accounts from Mark, Matthew and Luke, the women went to Jesus’ grave to care for the body as an act of love. But in John’s gospel account, Mary Magdalene was alone.

Today, we are sheltering in place to save ourselves and our neighbors from being infected by the novel coronavirus. Of course, we are rightfully afraid of this virus, as there is no vaccine, and maintaining a physical distance of at least six feet is one of the ways we can fight the virus. But like Mary Magdalene and the other women, we have to venture out to care for ourselves and our vulnerable family members and neighbors to get needed groceries, medicines and supplies.

When she arrived at the tomb, she saw the stone covering the entrance rolled away, so she ran for help to the disciples who were hiding in fear. She had assumed that someone had taken the body and reported it to them. So Peter and the other disciples whom Jesus loved ran to the tomb. News of this event reported by Mary Magdalene helped them overcome their fear.

Fear can paralyze us as it did most of the disciples. The fear of infection of the novel coronavirus can paralyze us as well. Day after day as we stay sheltered-in-place, and unless we adjust to the new reality, our lives and our relationships will suffer. I know I miss seeing all of you in the flesh. I imagine all of us has had plans disrupted: school graduations, trips to visit family or to explore the world, coming together with loved ones to celebrate milestones. In a way, being sheltered-in-place is like being home on the night of the Passover with the lamb’s blood on our door frames. But that was for one night, and this will last much, much longer. So in the meantime, we must adjust and communicate in different ways through teleconference, Zoom meetings, phone calls, emails, texts and letters. Although we are sheltering in place we can still reach out to one another and our neighbors.

Fear can also make us assume the worst, as it did for Mary Magdalene. When we are gripped by our fears, we no longer see the positive possibilities for our lives. Mary Magdalene could not imagine a life without her teacher Jesus, and she needed to hold on to him. What Mary assumed was that the love that Jesus shared with her was now gone with death. All that she would have left would be caring for his body, and now even that was gone.

With no vaccine for the novel coronavirus, it is easy to assume the worst as Mary Magdalene did. We could assume that people will turn on one another. We could assume that the love we share could be choked to death, or when a loved one dies, the love we have for him or her dies.

In our lesson from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter also had assumptions about what it meant to be God’s person in the world. He had assumed that God was a God for the Jewish people, that Jesus was the Messiah for the Jews alone. But he was shaken out of those assumptions by a dream, and an invitation from a Roman Centurion named Cornelius who also had a dream. What the resurrection meant was that death was conquered for all and the old distinctions no longer matter like they once did. As the Apostle Paul would say, there will be no Jew or Greek, male or female, we are all God’s children. Like Peter, Cornelius and Mary Magdalene, we must re-examine our assumptions of what this Covid-19 means for us. Life has changed, but life can still be good.

When the other disciple and Peter arrived at the tomb, they saw the evidence: the linen wrappings lying there and the linen cloth for Jesus’ head rolled up. The text said, the other disciple believed, meaning that perhaps they believed Mary Magdalene’s assumption that someone has taken away Jesus’ body. The men returned to their hiding place.

But Mary Magdalene had nowhere to go. She stood weeping outside the tomb until she summoned the courage to look inside the tomb for herself. And two angels and then the Risen Lord Jesus asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” And she repeated her assumption, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” She was focused on Jesus’ body, and wanted to care for him in death. But when we die in the body, we are no longer there. All is not lost. At death we are not in the body, but are released in the spirit to God who is Spirit.

Are we like Mary Magdalene, so focused on this life in the body that we lose sight of the spirit of the person who gave life to the body? When a loved one grows old and declines, or becomes ill and weakens in the body that person’s spirit is still with him or her. When the person dies in the body, does the spirit die as well? This may have been Mary Magdalene’s assumption too.

So when Mary Magdalene met the Risen Lord as a gardener, and heard him say her voice, “Mary” only in the way Jesus would have said it, then she knew that the Spirit of her Lord had not died with the body, but had risen and is alive. And Mary Magdalene being who she was wanted to hold on to the Risen Lord in the Spirit and reached out to do so, when she was told, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father.” In other words, the Risen Lord must ascend and be with God who is Spirit. The Risen and Ascended Lord Jesus lives with the God the Father, and is ever accessible to Mary Magdalene, to you, to me and to everyone. And when our loved ones die, our hope is that the love they held in this life will also be raised and ascend to God and be accessible, because love never dies.

So as we live through the novel Coronavirus pandemic, let us be guided by our resurrection faith and not our fears that paralyze us and make us assume the worst. As the author of the Letter to the Colossians says,

“If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” In other words, seek to be in love with Christ Jesus who entrusted his life to God and has risen and ascended to be in the Spirit with God the Father who is Spirit.

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Live for the holy and eternal spiritual gifts of mercy, compassion, patience, forgiveness and reconciliation, and not for the worldly things which are passing away.

“When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.” Rejoice in God who loves and saves us from living only for this worldly life, but who has shown us the way to die to ourselves, so we may in the spirit be reborn anew in Him. Alleluia! Christ is risen, the Lord is risen indeed, alleluia. Amen.

**I propose to show that the Resurrection faith calls us overcome our fears and the false assumptions we bring to our lives, so we may be reborn in the Spirit as children of God, and may realize that we are all called to live in love and charity with one another.**

**The Collect**

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

**The First Lesson**

**Acts 10:34-43**

Peter began to speak to Cornelius and the other Gentiles: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

**The Response**

**Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24**

***Confitemini Domino***

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; \*  
his mercy endures for ever.

2 Let Israel now proclaim, \*  
"His mercy endures for ever."

14 The Lord is my strength and my song, \*  
and he has become my salvation.

15 There is a sound of exultation and victory \*  
in the tents of the righteous:

16 "The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! \*  
the right hand of the Lord is exalted!  
the right hand of the Lord has triumphed!"

17 I shall not die, but live, \*  
and declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has punished me sorely, \*  
but he did not hand me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; \*  
I will enter them;  
I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 "This is the gate of the Lord; \*  
he who is righteous may enter."

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me \*  
and have become my salvation.

22 The same stone which the builders rejected \*  
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing, \*  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 On this day the Lord has acted; \*  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

**The Epistle**

**Colossians 3:1-4**

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

**The Gospel**

**John 20:1-18**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

**In preparation for this coming Sunday’s worship, please pray this coming Sunday’s Collect of the Day and read and reflect on the lessons assigned as printed below**

**The Second Sunday of Easter**

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31**

**The Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**The First Lesson**

**Acts 2:14a,22-32**

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, “You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me,   
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;

therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,   
or let your Holy One experience corruption.

You have made known to me the ways of life;   
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

“Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,   
nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.”

**The Response**

**Psalm 16**

***Conserva me, Domine***

1 Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you; \*  
I have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord,  
my good above all other."

2 All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land, \*  
upon those who are noble among the people.

3 But those who run after other gods \*  
shall have their troubles multiplied.

4 Their libations of blood I will not offer, \*  
nor take the names of their gods upon my lips.

5 O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; \*  
it is you who uphold my lot.

6 My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; \*  
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.

7 I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel; \*  
my heart teaches me, night after night.

8 I have set the Lord always before me; \*  
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.

9 My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; \*  
my body also shall rest in hope.

10 For you will not abandon me to the grave, \*  
nor let your holy one see the Pit.

11 You will show me the path of life; \*  
in your presence there is fullness of joy,  
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

**The Epistle**

**1 Peter 1:3-9**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith-- being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**The Gospel**

**John 20:19-31**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.