

Easter 2 Year B 2021
April 11, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Throughout the Easter season, our weekly readings help us answer the question, “What does resurrected life look like?” We begin with the resurrection story on Easter, where we experience the promise of resurrection and encounter the resurrected Christ. And now, as we continue throughout the Easter season, we will hear more stories of Jesus’ life as the resurrected Christ, and stories of what this promised life might look like for us as followers of Christ, too.

This is what we hear about in our first reading from Acts today. After the disciples encountered the resurrected Christ, their lives were transformed. The lives of the disciples would never be the same after they experienced the power of the empty tomb, because when Jesus proclaims victory over death and the grave, the world is turned upside down. And there is plenty in this world that is in need of transformation; plenty that needs to be turned on its head.

Consider our culture today. Our world is filled with brokenness. We are so hopelessly consumed by individualism and personal happiness that our culture has completely lost sight of caring for our neighbor and seeking the common good. This pandemic has gone on for over a year, and we are beginning to see the fourth surge of the virus in our state because we’re so concerned about ourselves and our own freedom and comfort, that we are unwilling to wear masks, get vaccinated, and properly social distance in order to protect ourselves and others from a deadly virus. We are convinced of a perceived right to do whatever our heart desires so that we don’t care how many people die as long as we can live the way that we choose.

Our individualism and concern for our own freedom has led to a world where we are ready and willing to sell out our neighbor, kidnap or murder our governor, and use fear and lies if it means that we might gain attention, get ahead, or gain power. Our culture is convinced that the only people that matter in this world are me, myself and I. As long as I have what I need, as long as I get what I want, as long as I am happy and healthy, then no one else matters. I’m doing just fine.

Even outside the pandemic, we refuse to see our neighbors in the best possible light, as we are instructed by the eighth commandment. We vilify our neighbors who are poor or oppressed. We tell ourselves he’s hungry because he’s lazy and doesn’t want to work. Look at her nice car and cell phone—she doesn’t really need to use the food pantry, she just needs to get her priorities straight. Or look at how she dressed, she was just asking for trouble. He deserved to be bullied because he didn’t act like us. Or we tell ourselves that the cops knelt on George Floyd’s neck and killed him because he looked like a criminal and deserved it. Our culture tells us that people are getting hurt or killed because *they* make poor choices. Our culture says it’s their fault that they’re in those situations. You name it; our culture has used it as an excuse to explain why it’s acceptable for *us* to live fairly comfortable lives when there are people in our communities and across our country who are hungry, oppressed, and subject to unnecessary violence. This is our culture. This is the world that we live in. It is a world that is in deep need of transformation. And this is the world that Christ has come to save.

So, when Christ is raised from the dead, and our lives are transformed by the resurrection promise, God calls us to renounce the old ways of this world and seek God’s new creation in our midst.

What does this new creation look like? What do our resurrected lives look like? Our reading from Acts gives us one picture of this new creation and resurrected life. Acts tells us that, “The

whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, ... and everything they owned was held in common. ... The apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. *There was not a needy person among them*, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." This is God's new creation that God promises to provide for us. And this is God's call for us: to live lives that are transformed by the promise of resurrection. We are called to be of one heart and soul—to live lives that are centered on Christ's life and love for all of creation. And when our lives are centered on Christ alone, we find a renewed value in community, and a value for every human life, a value that runs so deep that we give all that we have so that our gifts may be shared for the common good. God's new creation promises a world where no one has any need because everyone gives generously of what they have, and all of creation shares in God's abundance.

In the resurrection of Christ and in God's promise of eternal life, God promises a life for us that is more abundant than what we experience in our world today. God promises that our lives and our world are being transformed, and that God will use us in bringing about that transformation. Just as God used the disciples to transform their community, God is present and active in the world today and God promises to use us as God's hands in today's world. God calls us to use our gifts and our abundance for the benefit of all people. God has claimed us as God's children through Christ's death on the cross, and in the resurrection, God promises us and our world that we will have abundant life.

Today we hear that resurrected life looks like valuing and serving our neighbors and our global community so that all are fed, all receive care, all live with dignity, and all know God's abundant love for them. Resurrected life is a life of abundance, and a life where everyone's needs are met. And this is the life that God promises for us and that God uses our hands to create. Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Amen.