

Easter Sunday
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, TX
17 April 2022

Luke 24:1-12

Welcome to this great celebration of Easter. It is good to see you all here in this beautiful church for this wonderful celebration. This year has been extremely interesting for me personally for several reasons. For starters, I turned 56 years old back in February of this year and since then I have begun to realize that I don't know as much as I always thought I did. Experts call this wisdom. Wise people allow experience to be their teacher. They acknowledge that all knowledge is by nature limited and insufficient and we don't always have all the facts when making decisions. They know that life is not so much about the accumulation of knowledge, money or power, but rather about the building of loving relationships. They realize that life is transitory and nothing remains forever. We are here today and we are gone tomorrow. There is a time and there is a season for everything, as life is always evolving, changing, and unfolding.

In Biblical language, the love of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This love is described as awe, respect, admiration, total devotion, and even, fear. The wise person loves God above all things with all heart, mind, and soul. And this love is possible because the wise person makes it a point to remember what God has done for them, their family, and their community throughout their lives. In Holy Scripture God's faithfulness is remembered at festivals, family events, and special meals through hymns of praise, personal prayers, and various liturgies. All these devotions remind the people of God about who they are, where they have come from, and most importantly, where they are going. Both their identity and their vocation are deeply rooted in their relationship with God, and there is no area of their life that remains outside of that relationship.

We are here today to celebrate God's unique and limitless love. We are here to remember together who we are and where we came from. Humans are forgetful creatures who are called by God to remember his love, his protection, and his mercy. The events we remember at Easter are the single most important events the world has ever seen. A crucified, broken, despised, ridiculed, betrayed, and abandoned man, who was killed as a common criminal, is brought back to life by God's love. We believe that through his death and resurrection his people everywhere find restoration, new life, and redemption. And we are called to remember that all of this took place, not so much because humanity deserved to be rescued, but rather because God so loved the world that he gave up his only son to die a miserable death for us.

When the wise Christian realizes this most amazing fact, they begin to realize that life is not really about us and about what we can do for God. Life is all about God and what God has already done for us in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. The wise Christian remembers that God has loved us from the beginning of creation and that there is nothing that can ever separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord

and Savior. Knowing this allows the Christian the freedom to lay our sins, our guilt, and our shame at the foot of the cross of Jesus and to be truly free. Free from pain and anxiety. Free from regrets and resentments. Free from isolation and fear. Free from hopelessness and helplessness.

Today, we come together to remember a glorious morning when the women disciples found an empty tomb. “While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.’” I often wonder if we Christians spend too much time looking for Jesus among the dead, and fail to realize that he is alive. He is among us. He walks with us, even though we fail to recognize him often. But he is very much alive and in our midst. We know this because the women found an empty tomb. The cross could not contain him, the tomb could no longer hold him, death could no longer limit him, hatred no longer had any power to mock and ridicule him. He rose victorious and in him we who are his will also rise victorious when our race on earth is done.

The empty tomb reminds us that we are not alone in the universe. God has always been with us and will always be with us. He is on the side of humanity because he shares in our humanity, and he is not appalled by our brokenness. He is not repelled by our insecurities, he doesn't leave us in our pain even when we betray him and deny him. The empty tomb reminds us that death is not our ultimate destination and the end of the journey. We are eternity-bound. Our ultimate destiny lies beyond the River Jordan, in a place where God reigns supreme, and where his radiance fills the entire universe with love and peace. The empty tomb reminds us that pain has been conquered and that we will one day be with God in a place where suffering, tears, and pain have been vanquished for eternity, a place where death no longer has any dominion over us. The empty tomb reminds us that death has been swallowed up by life and it no longer has any power to terrify us and fill us with anxiety.

My friends we are here today because we need to remember that beauty and love will ultimately win the day. God will ultimately win the day and all the arrogance, sin, corruption, and hatred of the world will be defeated by the one who was able to defeat death. We need to remember that despotism and tyranny will one day be defeated. Tyrants are here just for a season, but soon enough they will be swallowed up by history to be forgotten soon enough. Only Christ lives forever. In him we are victorious, and there is nothing anywhere, that has any power to enslave us forever. We all have seen the dehumanizing actions of cruel tyrants these last few months. And it is easy to become overwhelmed and filled with anxiety. We see evil advancing and we forget that tyranny will never win the day. We are here, sitting on the same pews where many of those who came before us sat, to hear the same message of salvation that gave them hope, during their own times of darkness and tyranny. They sat here to pray for the victims of tyrants whose names we no longer remember. They were here to pray for peace during the dark times of their lives. And today we join them as we too pray for peace. We gather here in

their memory to hear the message of our salvation. That message is simple: Christ has conquered the evil of the world. He has done for us that which we are unable to do for ourselves. And the good news is that Christ did this for us before we had a chance to do anything for God. Christ is alive and he lives forever, and he is on the side of those who suffer at the hands of evil. He will hold evil to account in due time. So, we are here to rekindle our hope. Christ sees our suffering and he will liberate his people in due time.

Today is a day of celebration, a day of love, and a day of Joy. Today is a day of freedom and life. So, leave your burdens at the foot of this cross today. Leave whatever is afflicting or tormenting you at the foot of this cross, and celebrate with me the fact that you are alive, that Christ loves you without measure, and that your future is guaranteed. Celebrate with me the fact that death has been defeated, and allow yourself to experience freedom and restoration today.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!