

Sunrise Service Easter Sunday 3/31/24

As the people at St Paul's know, I frequently go out and have coffee with Preacher Sam at the Church of Christ. And we spend a lot of time talking about the differences between our two churches. The differences in how we do things, the differences in what we see. The difference is in who we are and it's great. It's great to be grounded that we can see the differences in people and then we share that even though we still have the same faith we all still believe that Jesus is our Savior, that he was risen today. That we can share all of that together. Through the Lenten lunches we spend a great time, all of us coming together. We spend five weeks celebrating fellowship at each different place. Each church and each minister has their own message that they give and we all listen and hear it. We all share that sense of being together.

Preacher Sam asks me every year why we celebrate Easter, because they don't. They believe that in Paul's letter to the Romans he says that we do not celebrate one day above any other, so celebrating Easter is different for them. I tell him that we don't celebrate Easter differently than them. It is not one day higher than the rest. It is an opportunity that we all get to share in what they went through at that time. We all get to celebrate Palm Sunday and rejoice in what was going on with him entering into Jerusalem. We get to be there Friday night at the crucifixion. And then today we all get to come together and celebrate the joy of the season. We have all sacrificed all Lenten season long and now we are at Easter and we get to celebrate together. We get to be happy because we know his sacrifice is going to save all of us. His sacrifice is so important to us that we are going to carry on. And we get to do it together. We get to set aside all of our differences because we were not meant to be alone.

Today's reading in Genesis is a little different than what we normally read, but I wanted to point, I wanted to see that God didn't just create us for Adam and then the rest. He created us because he loves us. He keeps changing things because he loves us so much that he wants us to grow and prove and become a part of his holy life.

In Psalm 23 there is one line in there that reminds me and gives me strength so much throughout the year. He makes me lie down in green pastures. Now most of you don't know or don't remember that I have not always been a minister. I have done a lot of things in my life. And every time I would do something, it seems that if I would do something against what I thought God wanted, something always happened. And I never understood it. Finally I realized. He is making me lie down. He is breaking my legs so that I quit doing things that are foolish. (I still do things that are foolish, we all know that.) But it is part of life and God forgives me for that. HE still leads me to still waters, he still protects me and guides me. BEcause of his love for me. Because of his love for all of us.

Mary's song is very similar to the solomer approaches we talked about last Friday night. She is talking about all the great things that God has done even though the Israelites rebelled against him, They still did things that weren't always with what he thought. They were not always with his teachings. But she was so grateful that he had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus. She was so grateful that she wasn't going through it alone. She had Elizabeth who at that time wouldn't have had a child. Not only did she have a child, she had John the Baptist so that Jesus had someone to go through this. It wasn't just him doing it alone. It was all of them, his family, his friends, going through this together. Going through God's love together. It wasn't just his life and his teachings they shared together.

In the last reading when he was presented at the temple, Simion told Mary she would also feel his death. She had given up so much for him, she had raised him, she had brought him there and she had sat with him through the crucifixion. She sat with him and waited because she loved him but more importantly she loved God, so much that she trusted what he was doing for her. What he was doing for all of us and the part that she played in it. And she came back the next day. She came back this morning expecting to see her son lying there still. To see the stone there, in front of the cave but instead they found a man who told them to be happy. Just like we are all here today.

He is risen. He is a part of all of us. He is sharing his love for God and he is sharing his love through us. And we are sharing it all together because we are not alone. Even though we might come from two different churches, we are still a community in Christ. We all know that we share this great love together.