

An Easter Meditation
St. Thomas Anglican Church, 2016

What implications can we draw from the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ? I think that they are many varied, and I suspect that taking hold of them is very needful for us, in a day when hearts and minds are directed into so many other paths.

Think of the improbability of it. The disciples simply couldn't take hold of it, until the joyous fact was so vividly and repeatedly presented to their very senses. Why was that so? Because everything, after all, consistently and inexorably spirals downward toward death. Our own physical bodies tell the tale, as does the cycle of nature. They are ever present witnesses to an inevitability to which all of us, barring the intervention of the miraculous, are utterly subject.

Moreover, the death of Christ was a death of unbelievable proportion: hours of abuse ending in the extinguishing of every element of life by slow, tortuous execution. It was not only the triumphal crushing of a physical life, but the rending apart of a heart and soul. His spirit was broken as He was forced to endure the experience of betrayal and abandonment by those nearest to Him, followed by the shame and disgrace of public exposure, the full force of the worst that human wickedness could contrive. It was a complete death.

There could be no greater finality than this process to which He was exposed. This is why His resurrection was such an improbability to His followers. They had heard his numerous prophecies of this very event, but its significance had missed them entirely, until retrospect brought it all to mind.

It is worthwhile to note that His rising from the dead went completely unnoticed by the world at large. Life carried on. Another star to which our faint hopes had been pinned, snuffed out by the inevitable passage of time and the unstoppable force of empire and government. On marches history, oblivious to those small interruptions to its progress that men, great and small, may provide. The sounds of commerce still filled the busy streets. Life, after all, is simply a series of dramas, with no apparent overarching meaning. The best that anyone can do with such a state of affairs is to resign oneself to it.

But the resurrection tells a very different tale, and it continues to proclaim it today, with the same breathless joy and wonder. Faith in the resurrection of Christ has in any age been the only truly revolutionary message against the great status quo of life on this earth, and don't allow yourselves to be fooled into thinking that it is one bit different in the very hour in which you and I find ourselves!

Every moment of life lived apart from the resurrected Lord is in some manner a foolish deal made with both the devil and death. And neither of those two deal well. What after all is presented as a certainty to mortal men? Is it good health? Is it luck? Is it the sure endurance of a

nation founded upon the best of principles? A solemn epitaph is etched across all that raises itself up in its own power and might: *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*. As Mary Magdalene clung to the feet of the resurrected Christ (John 20:16, 17), so must we, when there is so much going on to rob us of the significance of this very simple statement on our behalf: *But now Christ is risen from the dead...*(1 Cor. 15:20a).

He is Risen! Elections will come and go. The passage of time will leave us bereaved of friends and loved ones. We ourselves change, and sometimes we can barely recognize who we have become. Compelling personalities will wax strong and influential, and will be replaced by others. Ways of thinking, fads, musical styles, and “the best of whatever has ever been” will be replaced by something different and better. But Jesus is alive! All of history prior to that point looked to His white-robed, triumphant presence as He stood next to the tomb, and all of subsequent history to that event references itself back to that very moment, whether it is aware of that fact, or not.

We are a small people. Our standing within the larger culture is diminishing. A whole host of emotions accompanies such a state affairs: feelings of inferiority, of irrelevance, the discomfort of occupying a place of estrangement. We are no longer welcome, nor wanted. Our Jesus is no more attractive now than He was to those who couldn't stand Him in His own day. This is a heavy burden to be borne by a remnant. We cannot do so unaided.

But just as the Holy Ghost empowered the Church to proclaim Christ risen from the dead, so are we also. Peter cried out to his first audience in Jerusalem, not long after the day the Lord arose: *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses*. And we too are witnesses of His resurrection, not of course that we were present to view Him in person. But as He said to doubting Thomas, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe* (John 20:29). We behold Him by faith, working in our lives, going before, and behind us, present in our afflictions, present in our blessings, shaping our future, explaining to us His sovereign will in the details of our pasts, providing the miracles of love, joy, peace and a host of other virtues to our human hearts. How wonderful! He is risen, indeed.

So, we can feast on this fact, even if it means little or nothing whatsoever to the wider world. We can celebrate it as the flowers open, the birds return, the landscape is covered once again with greenery; with each new dawn after the night, with each period of relief from illness and pain; with each season of pleasantness following a time of depression or sadness. We can rejoice in the smallness, the plainness, the stark simplicity of this one fact which has become the very center of our existences.

But joy is never meant to be selfishly kept from others. Like fire, it constantly seeks the dry tinder of needy hearts which in turn will be ignited. The women at the empty tomb ran off at

the Lord's command to proclaim the Good News to His disciples, still in the grip of fear and unbelief. And the disciples themselves would soon receive the Great Commission to carry the message on to *all nations* (Matt. 28:19). And thus has it spread, even to you and me.

God grant that it will continue onward from here.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.