

John 10:11-18
April 25, 2021

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Happy Easter!

Yes – it's still Easter. I know – a lot of people like to argue with me about this one. My neighbor across the street was judging me to be stupid or something. "We all noticed that you still have your Easter stuff up."

Yeah! Of course I do! It's still Easter!

Easter goes all the way to Pentecost, 50 days after Easter Sunday. That's May 23 this year. So, I'll still happily have my Happy Easter sign along with my resurrected Jesus right there in my window all the way up until Pentecost whether my neighbors approve of it or not.

Because, it's really important that we remember that Jesus was resurrected physically, in the flesh. And, for 40 days he walked, talked, and ate with his disciples – in the flesh.

On the 40th day, Jesus ascended back into heaven, also in the flesh, which I find to be super comforting, but we're not to that point yet. It's still Easter and we continue to celebrate that after his death, Jesus took his life up again and continued to be with us in the flesh.

Nothing can keep Jesus from physically being with us, not even death, and not even his return to heaven, but we're not there yet either. That's Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is sent to be with us so that Jesus can continue to be physically with us in flesh through one another.

But here, in the 4th week of the 7 weeks of Easter, we can already see a bend in the road. Things are starting to turn. God's work is turning from Jesus to us.

In love, Jesus died for us and was resurrected for us. In love, Jesus leads the way for us as our good shepherd. And then, abiding in his love, we continue in God's work by loving one another – by caring for one another.

We hear our Lord's voice and we love others as we are loved by God.

God's voice leads us from death to resurrection. God's voice leads us to bring love into the world. Just as we have been loved, we are sent to love. When we abide in love, we love.

So, when we see someone in pain, we join them where they are and bring them Christ's physical presence. We bring them into resurrection. We take them from death to life via truth and action. Not just in words, but by what we do.

Talk is cheap if there are no actions that follow it. Words are worthless if they do not speak to the truth that is known physically in the world through Christ and his actions.

Jesus was killed and on the third day he took up his life again.

In John 10, Jesus tells his disciples this is what is going to happen in the future, he will be killed, he will die, and then he will take up his life again. In John 20, this truth is known physically in action.

With God, words are not cheap. God always keeps God's promises, and when God speaks actions follows. Actions that require a physical presence. Truth is known in action. And, God acts. God is always acting.

And now here, in the fourth Sunday of Easter, the physical actions of truth are slowly being turned over to us. It will no longer be just Jesus' actions, but the actions of the Church that will make a difference in the world as we continue God's work.

And if the Church doesn't physically act out God's truth in the world, then we are worthless. We are what Paul calls a noisy gong, and you know how annoying that can be. Gong, gong, gong, gong, and nothing ever comes of it. Gongs are meant to call people to action.

And when Jesus calls us by name, we are being sent into action to physically be his presence of God's truth in the world, the truth that God is the creator of life and that God only wants life for all of creation.

Along with being the celebration of the resurrection, Easter is also a 50 day celebration of baptism, and in baptism God calls us by name as beloved children and sends us to live our inheritance of love, life, and light for the sake of the world.

In our baptismal covenant, which we affirm during Easter, we promise to follow Jesus into justice and peace in the world for the sake of the world.

Empowered by God, we take up the cross and follow Jesus into the world with acts of truth, with acts that are life giving, with acts that are of Christ.

We know Jesus' voice. Jesus' voice is life spoken into the world. He is, after all, God's Word incarnate. God's creating Word in the flesh. He is the Word of Life.

And in life, we are known by God and we know God, and that is why Jesus cannot stay dead and why he uses us in the world to share God's truth of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and grace. He uses us in the world to share love and proclaim life.

And so in the book of Acts, the disciples are not angry about what happened to Jesus. They don't hate the religious leaders. They do not seek revenge. No. Instead they focus on bringing healing into the world. They do good deeds for the sake of others. They continue God's work.

We continue God's work. Like Jesus, instead of being self-centered and worried about ourselves, we care for the wellbeing of others regardless of what harm it may bring to us, because we are a death and resurrection people.

Disciples face outward as carriers of the truth who act in love for the wellbeing of all of creation.

In baptism, that is what we have been gifted to do. That is the whole reason we are baptized.

Christianity is a movement, and if we're not on the move, acting in the world, then it's not really Christianity at all.

Jesus is our good shepherd. He is loving us, caring for us, and leading us out into the world to be his physical, resurrected, presence in the world.

So, these seven weeks of Easter are really important. We cannot understand our mission if we do not understand the resurrection.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Amen.