

John 14:23-29  
May 22, 2022

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

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

I was reading a paper for the class I was taking and the author said that because the resurrection is so beyond our comprehension we have to just be open to God entering our daily lives. Because we cannot fathom what happened in the past, we just need to trust that God continues to work resurrection today, transforming death into life in our day to day lives.

In the reading that we have from Acts today, Paul shows us that not only do we have to be open to the Holy Spirit working resurrection here and now, we also need to be open to the fact that it's likely not going to look like we expect it to. It could, in fact, be the total opposite.

Paul was in Turkey when he had a vision of a man in Greece begging him to bring the gospel to them. So, Paul and his friends crossed the Aegean Sea to look for this man, but they didn't find a man. They didn't even find a Macedonian.

What they found instead was a woman from Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, the area from which Paul had just come. I think if I were Paul, I would have had a good laugh with God on that. A woman? From the area we just left?

The Lord works in mysterious ways and we aren't always the best at interpreting God's messages sent to us through dreams. But, Paul went to where he thought he was called and Paul was open to the Holy Spirit working, in whatever way that might be.

So even though he didn't find a Greek man waiting for him, Paul didn't turn away from the women at the stream to go off searching for a man that fit the vision he had. Instead he talked with the women and Lydia, who was also open to God working right where she was, far away from home, was transformed by Paul's message of the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

The Spirit is at work everywhere we go. Sometimes transforming us. Sometimes transforming others through us. All we need be is open to the possibility that it can happen. It can happen to us and through us.

And so Jesus tells us – you think it’s great having me around, but just wait until the Holy Spirit comes, because once the Spirit comes, I will be everywhere. I will be everywhere you go!

Through the Holy Spirit, resurrection happens today in, with, and among us, and it really shouldn’t be a surprise, right? We shouldn’t be surprised when the Holy Spirit is at work, because in Baptism we are assured that the Spirit is with us. Christ is with us, bringing resurrection everywhere we go. We only need be open to it so that it doesn’t pass us by.

I was watching “Bull” Thursday night, one of my favorite TV shows, and one of the characters actually talked about this, about feeling a call to do something. She had this deep feeling that just had to be pursued, so she went. But, it didn’t work out as she thought it would. It was even better than she had imagined. Marissa caught a bigger fish than she was even fishing for.

Granted, that’s TV, but I’m sure these things have happened to you as well. Serendipity it’s sometimes called. Providence is the old timey Christian term – like Providence, Rhode Island, which was founded by Roger Williams.

Roger Williams was a preacher in Salem, Mass. His preaching was not appreciated by the Puritans, so they kicked him out of the Plymouth Colony in 1635, in the middle of the winter.

But, what seemed to be a horrible situation ended up being a blessing. The Wampanoag found him freezing to death and took care of him over the Winter. In the Spring he started to build a town with his followers, but was again told by the mayor of Plymouth that he needed to move on.

The Narra-gan-sett welcomed him onto their land where he founded the town of Providence, which was located on an important cove used by many tribes in the area as a place of trade. With Roger Williams and his followers at the cove, the Native Americans could trade for English goods. In exchange for the land for his settlement, Williams promised the Narra-gan-sett all of the English goods they wanted.

Because Williams was chased out of Plymouth for his religious beliefs, he became a strong advocate of religious tolerance and welcomed anyone who was being persecuted for their beliefs to join his community.

Williams was a strong advocate for the separation of Church and State, what he called the wall of separation, meaning that the state could not tell anyone what religion to be. Over a hundred years later Thomas Jefferson picked up that idea as he worked on the US Constitution.

Roger Williams named his settlement Providence. Providence, a place of sanctuary for himself and for others, and it all started with getting kicked out of the home he knew and nearly freezing to death, and his providence has trickled down all the way to today.

God is at work. God is working here and now, right where we are. We need only be open to the possibility of resurrection occurring in, with, and among us in our daily lives.

On June 12, Juan de Dios Lopez was to be ordained. His ordination got moved to June 12, but at the time when I sent him a card, it was still set for Easter Sunday. I has some money left over from my trip to Disney World that I was keeping in a box in case I needed it for something.

As I was contemplating Juan's ordination at the Hallmark store and what card to get, I got the pull to give him the money I had in the box. So, I bought the card, went home, signed the card, put the money in it, and sent it on its way. Fast forward to Synod Assembly. I saw Juan and he gave me a big hug and thanked me so much for the money I sent him. He didn't go into details, because his English isn't that proficient and my Spanish is nil, but he said that it came at the perfect time and it helped him greatly.

Providence. The Spirit is at work – in, with, and through us.

As Ecclesiastes says, there is a time for gathering and loosing. Sometimes we have things to loose so that others can gather them. I had this money just laying around and when I let it loose, it was a blessing for someone else. Providence.

Jesus death and resurrection nearly 2000 years ago may be beyond our comprehension, but with the Holy Spirit, resurrection continues to happen here and now in the little things of our day to day lives. Simple things like mailing a card.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And that resurrection continues right where we are today! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Amen.