
My Sermon from Sunday April 18, 2021 'Easter 3' ~ "Ordinary Resurrection"

I speak to you in the name of the Risen Christ. Amen.

Did you know that there is an Orthodox tradition that involves telling jokes, especially jokes about death, on the day before Easter, on Holy Saturday? This tradition is to remind us that God had the last laugh on Easter and defeated the power of darkness and death so we would have, through faith, eternal life.

I am not comfortable telling you any of these jokes about death as I do not wish to trivialize death, especially since many people have died of COVID-19 and we have not been able to have funeral services for parishioners who have passed away since the pandemic began.

The English journalist of the 20th century Malcom Muggeridge was committed to communism before he went to Russia during the 1930s. He wanted to write an article about the decline of religion under communism. He started to do research for his story by attending worship services. He happened to be in Russia during the Easter season.

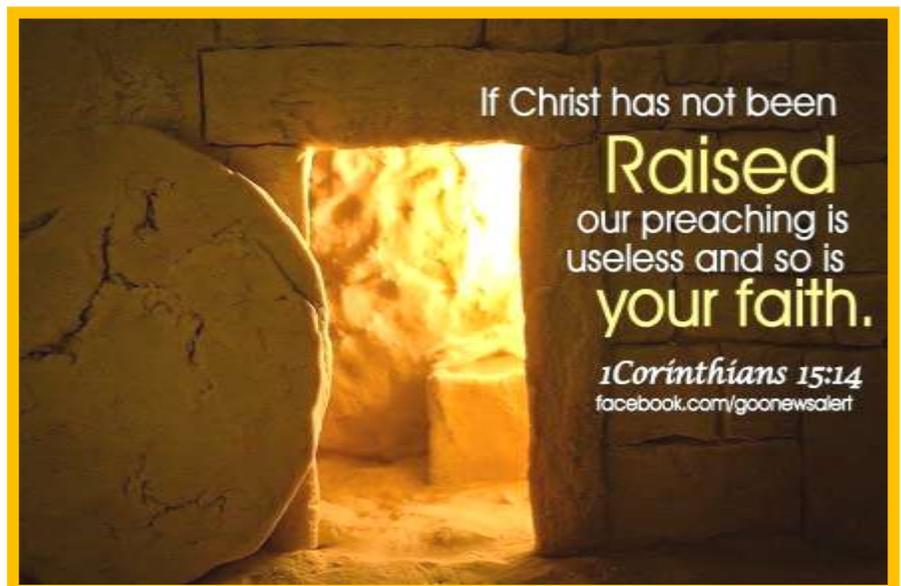
At the beginning of the service the priest said, *"Alleluia! Christ is risen,"* and the people shouted back, *"The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!"* And the reason why we still proclaim *"The Lord is risen indeed"* at the beginning of all of our services during the **7 week Easter season** is because these are the words that the 2 people on the road back to Emmaus said to the risen Christ when they were walking home on the road with him. They did not know that the man they were walking with was Jesus risen from the dead. They said to him, *"The Lord is risen indeed."*

Muggeridge looked into the worshippers' faces and instantly realized that they were right and that Stalin was wrong. Muggeridge later said it was the reality of their joy that turned him towards the risen Christ. The reality of Christian joy is compelling!

I love the Easter season particularly after the penitence of Lent. Every week we give thanks for the gift of the resurrection and for the reality that without the resurrection there would be no church. No resurrection. No Christianity. That is why St. Paul focuses only on the resurrection, and not on the birth, of Jesus. And Paul says it best:

*"If Christ has not been raised,
your faith is futile."*

(1 Corinthians 15:17)



The Gospel of Luke only includes 2 resurrection appearances. Both are powerful. One is what I have already mentioned: The risen Christ talks and walks with the 2 people on the **Road to Emmaus** and the other one is a post-resurrection appearance to the believers in the **Upper Room** in Jerusalem. That 2nd appearance is our gospel passage appointed for this 3rd Sunday of Easter.

Jesus stands among his disciples in the upper room. He begins by saying, “*Peace be with you.*” The believers think he is a ghost and so Jesus shows them his hands and his feet which still have the wounds from being nailed to the cross. Then he invites them to touch him. The disciples have many emotions ~ joy, fear, disbelief and wonder. Jesus then eats some fish in their presence and continues to speak with them about how he has fulfilled the prophecies of the scripture about the Messiah.

Now, if the risen Christ were suddenly in bodily form in front of me right now, I might expect him to levitate himself or walk on water or heal everyone in the hospital. I would also like to ask him many questions such as:

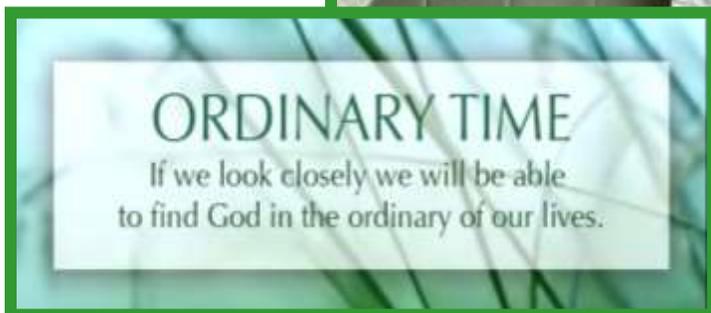
‘What is heaven really like?’ Or, ‘How did it feel to be resurrected?’ Or, ‘When will the pandemic end?’ Or, ‘What is going to happen with climate change?’ Or, ‘Will there ever be world peace?’

The risen Christ doesn’t do any of the above. In fact, in all of the resurrection appearances he does **ordinary things, ordinary actions**. The risen Christ does not need to be transfigured on top of a mountain or raise people from the dead and feed thousands.

Here are some of the ordinary moments:

- ❖ With Mary Magdalene, the risen Christ is walking in the garden and enjoying the morning air.
- ❖ With the 2 in Emmaus, he stays with them for dinner.
- ❖ With the disciples in the upper room, he touches them and they touch him.
- ❖ On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he cooks breakfast and eats fish.

It is in the ordinary moments of our lives where we discover the risen Christ, and we discover the power of the resurrection to



bless us and transform us . . .

I walked to the church with our dog Wally twice last week. The walk takes me 1 hour and 15 minutes. On foot, I am able to observe and enjoy ordinary moments in people’s ordinary lives. I

enjoyed watching people sit on a park bench, hang out laundry, rake their front yards, drink a morning cup of coffee outside, wait at a bus stop, pick up garbage before entering the dentist’s office where they work, or go through the drive-thru at *Tim’s*. With every step I took, all 9,800 of them, I thanked God for the gift of resurrection life. I celebrated the connection between my feet and the earth, or rather, pavement.



The risen Christ still had lessons for us. He taught us that it is in the simple everyday tasks of our ordinary lives that we draw close to him. It is in smiling at a friend on ZOOM. It is in preparing a tasty salad for lunch. It is in squeezing that avocado and finding out that it is perfectly ripe. It is in receiving a birthday card with a little money enclosed. It is in taking in our vehicle to have the winter tires removed with the knowledge that spring is really coming. It is in watching the tulips start to grow.

This is a lesson for life, for a meaningful life, for a rich life, for a fulfilling life, for a joyful life.

Look for the resurrection in every encounter you have. These ordinary moments then move to the extraordinary reality that God is truly with us, in us and we live in him.

Amen.

Archdeacon Deborah+
