

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

April 19, 2020



GET UP! STAND UP! (BELIEVE!)

The Rev. Andrew F. Kline

ACTS 2:14A, 22-32 | PSALM 16 | I PETER 1:3-9

JOHN 20:19-31

It is our privilege this morning – our pleasure the psalmist says – to share the great good news of resurrection with one another. As the news broke then, it unfolds today, in a two step process. First there is a rumor of an empty tomb. Then the minute we turn our attention from there, we run into quite something else.

Indeed, an empty tomb sends one out asking questions, looking for answers. It is no doubt an inconvenient truth, but also, alas, an inconclusive “fact”. There have been other empty tombs in history. The whereabouts of certain bodies were greatly debated in Jesus’ day. Elijah and Enoch were famous for punching their ticket straight up to heaven, and so, the rabbi’s speculated, had Moses, since the tradition had found no trace his grave.

Rabbi Jesus' empty tomb, however, turned out to be different, because once people started looking into it, well, something else happened.

On the evening of that first day, and in succeeding weeks, there were encounters. A marked, pierced, traumatized, yet resilient, body. And then, a gift and a mission.

Outside the tomb, people began to see things. But more than just "visions". They experienced the mundane in a new key, a new light.

Greetings, conversing, eating and drinking, sharing a life from another place, completely transformed. Because in front of them was a body transformed.

The encounter with the Risen Lord sends us back with the questions we started with, but also with questions we didn't know we had. Resurrection, in many languages, means simply, to get up, to stand up. But then what?

We realize we are no longer alone, but standing in a community, with a whole new company of witnesses to something new in the world. We realize we have been given more than a mission. A commission.

Get up. Stand up. Don't give up the fight.

Just as there are two traditions that tell the story – the empty tomb and the encounter with a transformed body – there are two different energies at work in us as we try to understand, to grasp, to comprehend, to believe.

First there is the energy of Matthew's revelation. The earthquake, the angel who rolls away the rock at the door of the tomb, the voice that says, "you won't find him here; you are going to have to go looking elsewhere."

And the minute they turn around, those startled women basically run right into him, stumble right across it, finding the shock of their life turned into a gaze that holds them forever. Seek and you shall find! Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!

But also, there is another energy, the unfolding of a truth as complex and subtle as the one in John's gospel. Disciples locked behind closed doors, scared, self isolating, anxious of the perilous conditions outside, thinking this is the end of the story.

And then, in slips a turn of the page, an evidence based plot twist, a presence occupying not just their vision, but every one of their senses. Peace be with you. Peace? Where did that come from?

It is there. Peace. A new breath, a new wind, a new energy, and a new language that will take them all over the globe. Again, "resurrection," in many languages, means simply "to get up. To stand up."

We who encounter the rise Lord find ourselves acting this out in our lives. Get up. Stand up. Don't give up, stay connected to him, and you will be found! You are free. He finds us and gives us back our life and puts us to work!

The beautiful truth of Thomas is that he was not a doubter at all. He was simply someone who could not forget who Jesus was, and would not treat lightly all that Jesus went through and suffered. Thomas wanted to honor the Messiah's mission, and to remember what it cost him, what it cost them. He was determined to stand up for those truths.

The witness of Thomas is not there so that future super believers can have bragging rights. No. The story of Thomas tells us that we are in this together. We stand or fall together. Jesus not only died for all. He brings us all back to life, each in our own way.

Jesus passes through locked doors, stands among us, until a new imagination and capacity has been breathed into us. The explosion of new life found in the empty tomb goes out to the whole world, finding expression in every soul, in PARTICULAR.

This medicine is not random, accidental, or just meant for some. As in every age, every new manifestation of death is defeated, as a peculiar anxiety of a specific age is overcome, Christ destroys and disarms death by his death. The dead are raised, all, together. We are raised. Or none are raised.

Not one soul is ultimately absent, missing in action, unaccounted for. If you are not transformed, then I am not transformed. So every single fresh blade of green grass, springing forth, says, "My Lord and my God."

Thomas breathes these matchless words, "my Lord and my God," because he has within his grasp the marks, the scars, the piercings, the proof of what God will go through for us.

He recognizes he has been praying for it every day. And his prayers have been answered. “Thy Kingdom come. They will be done. On earth, as in heaven.”

Thomas said, “I will not believe unless...” Jesus countered, “Do not doubt but believe.” In other words, Jesus said, “Get up! Stand up! Live!” Doubt, like death itself, vanishes in such light, from such a new place.

Church. This unprecedented hour is a resurrection hour. This struggle against a novel virus, this self-imposed grinding to a halt of a global economy, this choice to take care of ourselves and the most vulnerable of a global family, to find new life amidst so much death, is a moment when we prove we are an Easter people.

It is a moment when life is to be dreamed anew, where we can expect Jesus to show up in our midst and breath into us. From there, we will steadily advance his mission to bring reconciliation, to bring and bear life that overcomes death.

So, you missed it? You showed up eight days later. Yet there it is. A whole family getting up. Standing up. Full of a new energy.

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me; *
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.

⁹ My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; *
my body also shall rest in hope.

¹⁰ For you will not abandon me to the grave, *
nor let your holy one see the Pit.

¹¹ You will show me the path of life; *
in your presence there is fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Get up! Stand up! He is in our midst, marked by his infinite passion, bearing the world's suffering. See his hands and his side. He is in our midst with what we need. Our Lord and our God!

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