

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

23 E. Airy Street | Norristown PA 19401 | (610) 272-4092



## WHERE WE WILL SEE HIM

**The Rev. Andrew F. Kline**

Text of a Sermon preached on Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

ACTS 10:34-43 | PSALM 118:1-2, 14-24

! CORINTHIANS 15:1-11 | MARK 16:1-8

“So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

My dear friends: it is the first day of week, the day the women went with their spices, to do their duty for their beloved, wondering: “Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?” We have just finished our Passover celebrations. That is, I invite you to remember the last big gathering you had that felt like a party, when you said to your neighbor, “sure, come on over.”

I had hoped to be with you this morning, but the virus had other plans. I am quite well physically. Most likely because I have had one shot of the vaccine. But my family is struggling to various degrees. Thank you for your prayers. I am in solidarity with them, but isolated from you by quarantine. I miss you all so much. I can't wait to be with you, face to face, to wish you a Happy Easter.

It has been a terrible horrible year. Because of it, we cannot be together as we want. Some of us, against reason, must go out. Some of us, against sanity, stay inside. All of us, in one way or another, have found ourselves behind closed doors, with covered faces, distancing ourselves from one another. We wait for things to change. Often, we just don't know what to do. We are all a bit stuck.

Being stuck is the problem. We humans are wonderfully made. We are so adaptable. We have survived erupting volcanos, ice ages, mastodons and tigers, endless wars, and a multitude of plagues.

But a pandemic might just be a new thing. It has us all stuck, all at the same time. And being stuck goes against our innermost drive to survive, to adapt, to grow, to change, to live. The result is a word now so often on our lips: "trauma."

Here is a simple powerful definition of trauma: "something that happens too much, too fast, too soon, for too long, without reprieve, or limited reprieve — and we get stuck."

For instance, when we are lied about, condemned, mocked, beaten, stripped, poisoned, nailed to a cross. There is nowhere to go. The essence of trauma.

Vaccine or no vaccine, mask or no mask, family gatherings or no family gatherings, we are all stuck in layers of trauma. Like the great world wars, like the new diseases that we know will surely come next, like the growing division between the privileged and the disadvantaged, we, by definition, are not able to move past, in society at large, what is "too much, too fast, too soon, for too long, without reprieve, or limited reprieve".

Being stuck is bad. Being collectively stuck is what makes this pandemic unique. Many of us grew up in families where we were told to "forget whatever happened to us in the past, and just move on. Some

of us bury these wounds deep. Some of us have courage to bring these scars to the light. Some of us move on. Some of us do not. Still, these traumas make us who we are, whether we move on or not. It turns out that how we move on from them is the main thing.

Fittingly, the women go inside the tomb, looking for clues, and they see a young man dressed in white, saying: “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

“He is going on ahead of you to Galilee.” What can this mean? The Risen One is going back - or is it forward - to where it all started, where he called us together as family, where we got the job of being disciples.

Well, we can say, the Risen Lord is going home! He is going back to where he healed Peter’s mother-in-law, where he reminded his own family that they were only family if they did God’s will, where he performed the signs of kingdom healing and mercy while at the same time patiently corrected so many misunderstandings.

But, decisively, he is going on ahead to watch them forgive each other, to watch them perform the resurrection miracle of staying together, to watch them get back to work as witnesses to an undying love.

There are at least three reasons to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. First, the empty tomb. Second, as Paul recounts, the resurrection appearances. But third, and more mysteriously, is the survival of the family, the birth and rebirth of the community of disciples, in spite of all this trauma. The very existence of the church is the miracle that the angel promises is awaiting them back home in Galilee.

As if to grammatically prove that what lies ahead is unfinished business, the very last sentence of Mark’s gospel is not even a complete sentence. “They fled in amazement and terror. And to no-one they said...” Said what?

Clearly, the women eventually did speak up. They went back, no, went forward, to take part in a divine community being born. They

return home to do those acts of mercy and forgiveness that will make their home seem unrecognizable. They follow again and find their family.

The angel invites us to complete the story for ourselves. Of course, the story is not only our story. It is God's story, hidden in our lives, and now breaking out. It becomes our story as we bless the poor, comfort those who mourn, encourage those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, defend the meek, lift up the merciful, and protect the pure in heart.

The gospel transforms every story as it lifts us, disentangles us, and moves us forward from our trauma, from within and without. We make it our story as, together, we love our neighbor from the heart.

And so here we are. Are we still stuck, standing in front of this empty tomb, defeated by our losses, our grief, our trauma?

May God give us each grace to turn, and catch sight of where Jesus is leading on ahead.

He goes both backward and forward into each of our lives. He is there waiting to show us the joys of divine companionship, the meaning of our shared task as a community of faith, and the power of God to relieve and give us victory over every suffering, every roadblock, every trauma, every end to our story.

The angel said, as if to no one in particular, as if to you and me: "He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him."

Praise God. Take it to heart. Look for him there. Look for him here. And we will see him. All. Together.