

Sermon Transcript for 2nd Sunday of Easter - April 27, 2025

For those playing church bingo, the square that says pastor's going to say it's still Easter, you can put your little marker on that or sign it off because here I am going to tell you it's still Easter

49 days of Easter that takes us from Easter Sunday to the day of Pentecost

I tell you this because this puts us in solidarity as we are grafted into tradition of our Jewish sisters and brothers who mark this same period of time and on their festival of weeks is our Day of Pentecost.

I wanted to lift that up this morning.

The other thing I'll call your attention to, the readings today in particular seem to echo much of what we do

as we sing together and even our hymns.

So there are so many of those points at which you will catch the echoes.

I invite you to be aware of them, but I won't telegraph each and every one.

I think the other item to talk about today is that our hymns are in this book, henceforth known as the big book.

We call it the cranberry hymnal, whatever you're comfortable with.

Our communion liturgy and our prayers and such are found in this smaller book.

I noticed last week you were all particularly adept at moving between books.

So just to let you know that that will be a skill that we'll ask you to call upon once again.

I'll say a word about communion today simply because distributing will be slightly different.

We have a new worship assistant for that, namely me, so I'll get into that.

But just so you know, Jesus feeds everybody.

And that means that when we have communion in that spirit, we invite everybody to communion.

So we invite you and when you come forward, we will have our customary, well, kind of newish customary line that we've been forming here,

facing the altar, I will bring bread, but please wait because then I'll need to run back and get wine and bring wine so that you can receive both bread and wine today.

Now Bart reads the room. Let's see did I fog up things with that explanation or does that kind of help as we...

Okay, thank you.

[music]

The Holy Gospel, according to Saint John, the 20th chapter.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were for fear of the authorities,

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side, then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

And Jesus said again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And when Jesus had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.

If you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas, the one called the twin, one of the twelve was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

But Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later, Jesus' disciples were again in the house and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

"Peace be with you."

And then Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it my side. Do not doubt but believe."

And Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God."

And Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you've seen me?"

Bless the ones who have not seen yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing in him, you may have life in his name.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Won't you be seated

Sermon

Grace and peace to you from the one that was, who is and who is to come

The risen Christ meets people where they are and seems to make himself known in ways that maybe they particularly need to experience.

Mary, a Magdalene, who since at least the 12th century has been called the Apostle to the Apostles, she needed to hear Jesus call her by name.

Thomas needed to touch the wounds.

Peter needed to see a vacant tomb and somehow managed to connect the dots.

But what about us? Where does Jesus the risen Christ meet us to make himself known to us?

Well, that's a walloped question that I'm not sure I can give a lot of answer to just yet.

I'd like to speak for a few minutes though about this notion of belief

and what it means that the risen Christ has been made known to us.

We might think of belief as maybe you remember those proofs in geometry class.

Uh oh, I shouldn't have brought that up.

You remember those since this, since this, this happens and it's proof.

This is not the sort of belief that John invites us into if you start way at the beginning of the gospel when he speaks about the very essence of God becoming embodied and then entering into the human experience to live in a relationship with us.

And there are many, many instances where Jesus invites people into his life.

Come and see, abide, remain.

That's belief.

It's sort of like if I were to ask you to pick someone in your life that you love very much, prove to me their existence, you're probably not going to trot out a lot of scientific and biological information.

But instead you might speak about what this person means to you and who that person is to you.

That's belief.

But what about somebody that you've never actually met as you meet other people in your daily life?

How is it that the risen Christ makes himself known to us?

A lot of it really hinges on the experience of those who met him first.

It hinges on the witness of people who've lived a life where they have experienced resurrection moments.

And as I look at you, sometimes for me the proof of the risen Christ is in the lives that you lead.

Not geometric proof, but light shining, right?

Most of us know back to science for a second when we say, "Wow, wasn't the moon just bright yesterday last evening?"

We know it wasn't. It was reflecting the light from the sun.

And so we're sort of like those satellites, I suppose, that we reflect the light that shines within and upon us.

I think the most direct connection for me this week has been remembering Pope Francis.

Maybe he came as a surprise.

I mean he had this phenomenal recovery and was already having meetings and blessing and doing all of the events of Holy Week and Easter.

And then we get news on Monday that he has died.

But in thinking about his life that even his last breaths were about justice and remembering the poor and the vulnerable.

That seems to be reflected light of the resurrected Christ.

There is a writing from about ten years ago, an encyclical they're called, a beautiful document that talks about care of the world that God made.

And thankfully the title may be in Latin, but the rest is in English text and is pretty accessible.

So if you want to do a Google search about care for the earth, Pope Francis encyclical, it'll appear there for you.

Reflected light.

It would be he who speaks of our economy in some ways to warn us that we have fallen into idolatry and have made new kinds of golden calves, he said.

An economy that is based on nothing even humane, he says.

A monopoly, a dictatorship of impersonal things that have no real bearing on our humanity.

I'm not saying that Jesus always showed up gently, right?

Remember that whole table thing, you know, tipping those over.

Okay.

I would say that maybe the Holy Father took his cues from Jesus in the people that he hung out with and the people he blessed.

And did you notice that at the funeral that there were dignitaries in attendance?

Yes, the most powerful, but also the last and the lost and those the most vulnerable, the people that he seemed to love the most.

The reflected light of the risen Christ.

What does that look like for church?

What does it look like for us to be those people who haven't seen Jesus in the flesh, but in other ways have seen and experienced Jesus?

I think if we start at our baptism, we are reminded that we are brought into the work of Christ.

And what do we say when we bring those impossibly cute little ones to the font?

We ask that they remember to care for the world that God made, to care for each other, to proclaim Christ in word and deed.

And a word for justice and a word for peace.

And how else might the risen Christ show up for us?

Well buckle up because this is catechism rerun.

So for those of you who grew up in church that did catechism and you're probably all know not that.

Oh, they're gonna maybe like stand at the blackboard and answer stuff and not to worry.

But I would like to remind you of some things that we used to talk about back in the day in catechism classes.

And today we will say as part of our service the creed, the nicene creed from like the fourth century.

I want to focus a minute on the last portion called an article of the creed.

That's the one where we say we believe in the Holy Spirit.

Now having read today's gospel, maybe we can think about Jesus imparting the Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life who proceeds from the Father and the Son who has worshiped and glorified.

And what follows the line about God has spoken through the prophets?

Or a number of things and some people, oh, was that because the convention was running late and people had trains to catch and planes to catch and maybe the hotel was going to bounce out the conference and they had to go.

And so they just listed a bunch of stuff? You're not buying that either, are you? No.

But if you connect it back to the breathing of the Spirit, the Spirit of God, this giver of life, when we say things like we believe in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, that's linked to Spirit, that's linked to risen Christ.

And I don't know, I feel the need to bart-splain some of this, so forgive me if this is old hat to you.

A Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Holy we think we might know, but please don't confuse it with holier than now.

Holy really means whole, integrated, healthy and set aside for a particular reason.

Our reason being bearing witness to the love of God.

And then there's the word Catholic.

Now I have to admit, as one who grew up in a Roman Catholic church and started hanging out with Lutherans, I didn't get that suspicion about, oh, that sounds awfully Catholic.

I guess I don't appreciate that suspicion because I just didn't get it.

But we've had to unpack it. What does Catholic actually mean except universal?

All times and all places.

So this Holy Spirit who gathers us together, who has a purpose for us of all times and places, sends us.

That's the word Apostolic, literally.

If you pride that word apart and had a little fun with Greek verbs, you would find that the word Apostle is a person who was sent out.

That's the church. Holy, universal and sent.

These days though, the geography of how far we're sent probably is not as it was in Thomas' day.

Maybe it's farther if you think about the worldwide web though.

But we are indeed sent to do the very things that the first followers were sent to do.

To proclaim Christ in word indeed.

To care for this world that God made. To work for justice and work for peace.

To do all of that.

Imagine trying to do it without the empowerment of a risen Christ imparting to us the very Spirit of God.

And so church, at least this portion of it, we remember our baptism, we remember our risen Christ, we remember that we reflect the light of the risen Christ wherever we go.

That's who we are. That's what we do.

And we do that for the same reason that God hatched this audacious plan to mend all a creation by having the very essence of God enfleshed.

God's motive? First, last and always?

Amen

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]