

"I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit." John 15:5

Vine & Branches

from St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, 720 N. King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 • Phone (808) 845-2112

Special Weekly Edition April 15, 2020

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Love and Resurrection

Every once in awhile I'll hear of a bishop who says something like: "No rational, thinking person can believe in the resurrection."

And I must say, every time I hear that, it practically takes my breath away.

After all, isn't it Paul, at the very beginning of it all, who says that if Christ is not raised, then our faith is for nothing?

That, if he isn't raised, we are simply fools, and rightful objects of pitiful disdain?

And yet in these modern times, we Christians seem to be in one of two camps. The first camp says we don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus because science proves dead people stay dead. And so we admire Jesus for his moral witness and we believe his soul went up to God.

The second camp says that no matter what science says, God, from time to time, will poke his finger into our affairs and perform a supernatural miracle, which includes the bodily resurrection of Jesus. But both of those camps make an assumption about God that is based neither in the Jewish faith nor in early Christianity.

In fact, both camps reflect a very old world view, one that the Greeks invented, which we rediscovered and embraced a few hundred years ago — when the rise of science and so-called "objective thinking" gave us what we now call "the Enlightenment."

It's a view of reality that says God (or the gods) (assuming God or the gods exist) put things in motion, and then left us to our own devices. It's a view of reality that says between heaven and earth there is a deep canyon which, during our life, is never crossed, except maybe for that rare, supernatural, intervention.

This is a view we humans love of course, because it means we are in control of our own destiny. We get to make war as we see fit. We get to control people, places and things, because, after all, God (or the gods) left it all to us.

But that's not our faith! Our faith is in a good Creator who is constantly in the process of calling all that is into being; One who creates us in the very image of the Creator. Our faith beckons us to meet the One who is so intimately connected with us that he walks in the garden with our first parents.

Who leads his first people out of slavery through waters and desert. Who, when the time is right, becomes one of us! Lives with us! Laughs with us!

Reminding us of who and what we are intended to be. Who then dies at the hands of our addiction, our obsession, our insistence, that we be in control. That death occurred on Friday. It's Sunday morning now, and a question is posed, awaiting an answer: Who wins? God — or us?

And in the resurrection, the answer is: God wins.



Not through a supernatural intervention from some far away place, but through the ever existing Source that holds all things together.

The resurrection is not an out of this world miracle as much as it is the direct and natural consequence of the power of love.

That singular power which is the true Source of all that is. The resurrection is God redeeming the old creation, transforming it into what it was always intended to be: a place where love rules.

And so Jesus' body is itself redeemed, the first fruit of this new, restored, creation.

He bears the marks of his wounds, and yet he also appears and disappears at will.

Meaning, that the scars and brokenness we encounter in this world are healed and transformed, but never abandoned.

Love carries who we are into this new way of being. And so he eats breakfast with his friends, then vanishes after breaking bread with the disciples at Emmaus.

Which tells us that the banquet feast of God is not a spiritual daydream, but a real meal, where real, yet transformed delights await us.

The resurrection is a glimpse into the true nature of reality. What is real is not us here and God far away, but God right here, among us, revealing herself in the faces of the poor, the vulnerable, the needy.

What is real is that heaven and earth, the sacred and the profane, the holy and the ordinary, intersect, overlap, and are infused with each other.

What is real is that the cosmic shift in the world occurred not during the last few hundred years with the so-called Enlightenment.

The real cosmic shift occurred on Easter morning, when our true nature and our true destiny is revealed.

On Easter morning, we learn again what it means to be made in the image of God.

On the one hand, it means every human being carries within themselves the spark of the divine.

But as importantly, it means we share in the task of the divine — to encounter creation from the standpoint of love.

To care for the earth and each other. To discover what we all of us know deep in our bones: that love and service are the wellspring of life.

The philosopher says: "It is love that believes the resurrection."

Not gooey, sentimental, subjective love. But the love that is enchanted with, respectful of, and surrenders to the joy of knowing and loving another — as they are, for who they are.

For the last few hundred years, love has been cut out of the text of our universities, our businesses, our governments.

We have reduced it to marshmallow sweetness or banal Hallmark cards. Yet love is the life force of creation!

How different from our current thinking, which sees reality as a cosmic accident, the result of lucky chance, in which power and manipulation and coercion are the coin of the realm.

How different from our social engineering that relegates so many to so little in life, so that the few may enjoy wealth beyond measure.

If we finally recapture the significance of this day, if we open ourselves to the vast power of love: of one another, of this planet, of ourselves as beloved children of God, we can then be part of the unfolding new creation that began that first Easter morning.

In these days of pandemic, while our secular gods of money and entertainment are on the ropes, we have a chance to reclaim our true character — and our true destiny.

We can create communities grounded in loving service, in accepting one another as equally blessed children of the good Creator.

And when we do that, we can change the world! So this Easter, take hold of your true self!

Recognize that the God who raises Jesus from the dead is the same God who will one day raise you too!

This is the stone that the builders reject, which becomes the cornerstone.

And what is the name of that rejected cornerstone? Its name is love.

Love raises Jesus today.

Love raises you too.

Embrace it.

Learn from it.

Grow with it.

And when the time comes, die in it. So that we all of us may rise again — to a new and glorious life!

+amen

Saturday Morning Breakfast at St. Elizabeth's Continues!

Many thanks to the **musubi gang** for keeping something warm in folks bellies Saturday morning. Special thanks too to **Pastor Diane Martinson** for last weeks batch (complete with special note to each person!)



Ways to Give

To state the obvious, we are all continuing to adapt to a new lifestyle with the current "state of the State." One constant hasn't changed and that is your donations are needed now more than ever. The Church operates on a whopping \$40,000 a month to serve our long time members and to assist the many in need within our disadvantaged community. Pledge donations account for 25% of this sum. Water and electricity bills, salaries, repair and maintenance and of course outreach expenses still continue to rack up just the same in a pandemic.

So what can you do to HELP? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Send your entire pledge for the year in one lump sum or please mail in your weekly offering. If you make the lump sum contribution, you will be all good for 2020.

2. Contribute through GIVLIA. It's easy as pie. Visit www.stelizabeth720.org and click on the "GIVE" at the top center of the page. Scroll down and click on the link: <https://www.givlia.com/g/stelizabeth>. You can make a one-time electronic gift contribution or a recurring one. Consider saving a tree (no check writing) while racking up miles or getting cash back on your credit card.

3. You didn't pledge yet this year? No problem! This is a great time to give. For each donation of \$1,000 or more, your name or your loved one's name will be displayed on the new St. Elizabeth's 2020 "Year of the Pandemic" Contribution plaque.



Caren Chun-Esaki, Douglas Ing, Grethen Jong, Nella Kleinschmidt, Cathy Löwenberg
The Stewardship Committee

How the Virus Stole Easter By Kristi Bothur, With a nod to Dr. Seuss

Twas late in '19 when the virus began
Bringing chaos and fear to all people, each land.

People were sick, hospitals full,
Doctors overwhelmed, no one in school.

As winter gave way to the promise of spring,
The virus raged on, touching peasant and king.

People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen.
They YouTubed and Zoomed, social-distanced, and cleaned.

April approached and churches were closed.
"There won't be an Easter," the world supposed.

"There won't be church services, and egg hunts are out.
No reason for new dresses when we can't go about."

Holy Week started, as bleak as the rest.
The world was focused on masks and on tests.

"Easter can't happen this year," it proclaimed.
"Online and at home, it just won't be the same."

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went.
The virus pressed on; it just would not relent.

The world woke Sunday and nothing had changed.
The virus still menaced, the people, estranged.

"Pooh pooh to the saints," the world was grumbling.
"They're finding out now that no Easter is coming."

"They're just waking up! We know just what they'll do!
Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,

And then all the saints will all cry boo-hoo.
"That noise," said the world, "will be something to hear."
So it paused and the world put a hand to its ear.

And it did hear a sound coming through all the skies.
It started down low, then it started to rise.

But the sound wasn't depressed.
Why, this sound was triumphant!
It couldn't be so! But it grew with abundance!

The world stared around, popping its eyes.
Then it shook! What it saw was a shocking surprise!

Every saint in every nation, the tall and the small,
Was celebrating Jesus in spite of it all!

It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came! Somehow or
other, it came just the same!

And the world with its life quite stuck in
quarantine Stood puzzling and puzzling. "Just
how can it be?"

"It came without bonnets, it came without
bunnies, It came without egg hunts, cantatas,
or money."

Then the world thought of something it
hadn't before. "Maybe Easter," it thought,
"doesn't come from a store."

Maybe Easter, perhaps, means a little bit
more." And what happened then?

Well....the story's not done. What will YOU do?
Will you share with that one Or two or more
people needing hope in this night? Will you
share the source of your life in this fight?

The churches are empty - but so is the tomb,
And Jesus is victor over death, doom, and
gloom.

So this year at Easter, let this be our
prayer, As the virus still rages all around,
everywhere.

May the world see hope when it looks at
God's people. May the world see the church is
not a building or steeple.

May the world find Faith in Jesus' death and
resurrection, May the world find Joy in a
time of dejection.

May 2020 be known as the year of survival,
But not only that - Let it start a revival.

