|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Easter Day |
| Year A RCL |

Jeremiah 31:1-6

Colossians 3:1-4

John 20:1-18

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

**The Collect**Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

**The First Lesson**

**Jeremiah 31:1-6**

At that time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

Thus says the Lord:

The people who survived the sword  
found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,  
the Lord appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Again I will build you, and you shall be built,  
O virgin Israel!

Again you shall take your tambourines,  
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

Again you shall plant vineyards  
on the mountains of Samaria;

the planters shall plant,  
and shall enjoy the fruit.

For there shall be a day when sentinels will call  
in the hill country of Ephraim:

“Come, let us go up to Zion,  
to the Lord our God.”

**The Response**

**Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24**

***Confitemini Domino***

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; \*  
his mercy endures for ever.

2 Let Israel now proclaim, \*  
"His mercy endures for ever."

14 The Lord is my strength and my song, \*  
and he has become my salvation.

15 There is a sound of exultation and victory \*  
in the tents of the righteous:

16 "The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! \*  
the right hand of the Lord is exalted!  
the right hand of the Lord has triumphed!"

17 I shall not die, but live, \*  
and declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has punished me sorely, \*  
but he did not hand me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; \*  
I will enter them;  
I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 "This is the gate of the Lord; \*  
he who is righteous may enter."

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me \*  
and have become my salvation.

22 The same stone which the builders rejected \*  
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing, \*  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 On this day the Lord has acted; \*  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

**The Epistle**

**Colossians 3:1-4**

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

**The Gospel**

**John 20:1-18**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

I began writing my sermon for Easter Sunday on Maundy Thursday. That day we (which is to say the United States) “accidentally” killed 18 Syrian rebels, who were aligned with us. And later on that Thursday we dropped a massive bomb on Afghanistan reportedly on a stronghold of tunnels associated with ISIS.

I have listened to many sermons on Easter Sunday which begin, “The Lord is Risen, he is risen indeed!” or if you like the Greek: Χριστός ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη” and on so many levels, as a Christian that is where I am. Not only do I not dispute it, I truly believe it. I understand, and try my best to live it, that Christianity when most authentic and true is counter cultural. And yet, this frenetic series of exclamations at this particular time, on the ears sounds too much like—- we win; you lose; well, if you get on our side, you win too! So… for now, let us turn to what do we actually “win”. And ponder how this is true in this world right now, with all that is going on.

Well, you win Christ as your life revealed… according to the Colossians text.

which means that if you want to be like your master, you are expected to reveal Christ in your life.

The earliest church sermons pretty much consisted of only resurrection stories. The life of Jesus probably had some importance, but the important thing was that his body was gone. And let’s not act as if people 2000 years ago were stupid. Bodies then or now do not just disappear. There are tell-tale signs of grave-robbers. Now it probably does not pass CSI level scrutiny, but grave-robbers didn’t get passed Roman guards, and they didn’t leave the linens like the maid had come through. And it’s all pretty confusing for the disciples with where did the body go? Until we start seeing Jesus showing up time and time again, in the resurrection stories.

And although we have had some very unpleasant history, of people doing some horrible things in the name of Christ, alright just horrific stuff, we also have people who have been so touched by God through Christ that they were willing to die for their faith. And the story of the Christian faith is still going.. it does not stop.

Why doesn’t it stop? The reason is not because of who we are, but because of who God is. And that then becomes who we are and will be. Love coming through us in the name of Jesus.

God through Jesus’s resurrection gives an earth-shattering resounding “no” to violence, hatred, and loss of self, to all things that make us less of a flourishing loving person. It is not that we put a bright shiny face on everything, how can we? we are human. Yet, we have Jesus as a companion and know that death, sin, trauma, all the human things we can feel—- rejection, desolation, addiction, abuse,—- none of these have the last word, all are these can be answered with love. Perhaps not immediately, but with hope through Christ, we are able to travel that road and are not separated from God’s love. God’s love is with us through it all.

In the process of setting our minds on things that are above, in the process of discovering who Jesus is to us, we discover our true selves. We as ones made in the image of God, become the likeness of God in the world as we love as Jesus taught us to love. Even in death, he loved his betrayers, he even broke bread with the disciple who would betray him. He lived his life fully, fully loving. We are to do the same. This is but one way that sin and death do not have dominion. It is by the process of living in this way that sin and death do not define us.

It is not just a life after death, something we are waiting for at some later time, some sort of reward for good behavior or proper faith. Resurrection comes in the middle. Resurrection is not life in place of death, but life birthed from death!!! God re-making, re-creating as God does.

Which on occasion means we don’t recognize the holy right in front of us.

And yet, sometimes, there he is.

He is risen, he stands up. ἀνέστη.

There is nothing wasted. Not one tear, not one pang of pain goes unnoticed, but all are gathered up by God into goodness. Making true the proverb: God writes straight with crooked lines..

This is what we win: a life redeemed, folded into God’s life through God’s son. and this redeemed life in God’s life is present right here and now in a world where bombs drop and refugees drown and innocents die.

Our own lines crooked are then made straight when we allow it.

We have the opportunity, the choice, the privilege to believe truly and turn our lives to Christ, setting our mind on higher things, being Christ. We are risen with him. We help others to rise. We extend the open hand to be Christ in the world.

Χριστός ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη

He is risen!

*He is risen indeed*