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

Isaiah 25:6-9

Acts 10:34-43

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 Reading**

**Isaiah 25:6-9**

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,   
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;   
he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,   
for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.   
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;   
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

**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 Second Reading**

**Acts 10:34-43**

Peter began to speak to Cornelius and the other Gentiles: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

**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.

He is risen! he is risen indeed!

It’s the way all Easter sermons start off, so why should this one be any different? It is Easter, we are here to celebrate and to praise God for God’s acts. But let’s be honest, the joy of the resurrection just doesn’t sound quite as joyous on that day a couple of thousand of years ago. It is a known fact— when a person is dead, the body is supposed to stay buried. This day around 2000 years ago started off terrifying on so many levels.

Back in September 2005, I was in Tampa, Florida, taking a set of exams when I was phoned (again) to see if I could be made a temporary federal employee. I had declined the first invitation because of these exams I was sitting. However, I was quickly slated to go help with the identification of the deceased after hurricanes Katrina and Rita had decimated the gulf coast of Louisiana and Mississippi. The timing placed me primarily in the process of identifying the bodies that had been washed out of the crypts in which they had been buried—- places where they had been laid to rest some days, months, or years before. When a body is buried, the body is supposed to stay buried. There is a whole other level of grief when the last vestiges of the person are gone.

I imagine this sort of grief is probably akin to what Mary was feeling that morning. She had already been through so much. I mean, she watched Jesus die on the cross. She sets off to the tomb before it’s light. Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus were to take care of Jesus’s body. They were part of the Sanhedrin. Could they be trusted… really trusted? So when Mary arrives at the tomb, and the stone is rolled away, and it is empty, she is not just puzzled, but her terror continues. What happened? The grief is unimaginable. It’s bad enough that the beloved person is dead and now the body is missing. The first explanation of an empty tomb then was grave robbers. Her thoughts were logical to suspect that someone had taken the body.

Although the empty tomb, on some level, marks the beginning of everyone’s faith journey, that said, people in general, and specifically the characters of this Gospel don’t believe ***because*** the tomb is empty, they and we believe because of an encounter they had and we have with the risen Lord. It is the actions that God takes in our lives that matter and cause us to believe.

Let’s take a few moments to look closely. Let’s look at the people in this Gospel passage: Peter, the beloved disciple (possibly named John of this very Gospel) and Mary Magdalene. We’ll look at a very quick summary of the high points of what we know about them:

Peter- you are the rock on which I will build my church, the keys of heaven, “get behind me Satan,” Jesus, then wash all of me, deny me twice before the cock crows, race to the tomb with the beloved disciple (lose the race), but he is first in the tomb. He believes (but what does he and the beloved disciple believe? does he believe then that Jesus is risen or does he believe Mary’s pronouncment that the body is gone?}, risen Jesus visits in the upper room, encounter by the shore being told “feed my sheep”… and then in our letter today, the realization that all are welcome at the table, not just Jews. When in this story does Peter believe Jesus is the Messiah AND that he is risen?

I suspect somewhere between the tomb and the upper room… he has an encounter with the risen Lord.

Beloved disciple- reclining at the feet of Jesus, being instructed from the cross to take care of mom and Mother Mary, to take care of him, a foot race, believing when he sees the wraps separate (perhaps not the work of a grave robber, but again, what does he and Peter believe? does he believe then that Jesus is risen or does he believe Mary’s pronouncment that the body is gone?), then the upper room. He is the one most attached and maybe the one most likely to believe. When in this story does the Beloved Disciple believe that Jesus is the Messiah AND that he is risen?

I suspect somewhere between the tomb and the upper room… he has an encounter with the risen Lord.

Mary Magdalene- maybe she is the woman who anoints Jesus, we are told she is present at the crucifixion, she knows that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea took the body for burial, she encounters angels— and seems to have a nice conversation with them, strange as that is… and then she encounters the risen Jesus—- but Jesus is clearly not able to be recognized by her at that point, because she mistakes him for the gardener.

When does she believe? It’s different for her. When does she believe? She is by some accounts then the first disciple of the risen Lord, she believes….

When he calls her name. .. when he calls her name.

She has an encounter with the risen Lord.

Think about your own faith walk. You are not running a foot race to the empty tomb. You are not in the upper room, But when did you first know Jesus? When did you first know Jesus as the Messiah AND that he is risen? Maybe it has been part of the fabric for all your life, maybe not. Maybe the familiar is harder to reckon with.

What encounter or encounters have you had?

And how do you encounter the risen Lord day in day out?

What difference does it make in your life?

As you look for when you have known the crucified and risen One, look for the effects of the resurrection in your own life, look for the encounters. look for what is true, look for what you need to leave behind that holds you captive from living more fully. Jesus has never waited for us to get ourselves together. He is patient to wait for us when we need time, but his love is never on hold. Jesus is there when we don’t expect it, when we are scared, when we are broken and when we are downtrodden.

He is risen! Jesus lives for you today. Today. This day and every day. This is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it. We can see the resurrection in so many ways, and like Mary, we know Jesus when we are called. And if we pause to listen we will hear that we continue to be called, which makes the resurrection as real today as it was thousands of years ago. The resurrection changes everything for the disciples and for us as disciples— Listen for Jesus calling, calling you to a resurrected life now.