

Good Morning! Peace be with you! How is it with your soul? It is well with my soul.

Three days had passed. The women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body, according to custom. No doubt the journey to the tomb was heavy. Perhaps they approached with heads lowered in defeat and grief. But then they looked up and it changed their lives. The barrier that they thought would be there was gone and what they discovered instead was life.

The **question for us is:** Will we look up? Will we look up from our complacency, apathy, fear and despair about "the way things are" and be filled with the promise of new life and hope yet again?

Let's begin with prayer. *Ever-Living God, we come with our heads bent down sometimes, overwhelmed with Good Friday news. Raise us up, lift up our eyes, so that we might look up and see the tenacity of life in the midst of death* Now, *May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, you who are rock, redeemer, and Renewer of us all. Amen.*

Easter arrives on heights after the long descent of Lent and (especially) Holy Week. We have walked with Jesus through the valley of the shadow of death, processed on a donkey up into Jerusalem, sat at table with Him, prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and then watched in horror as the religious and political leaders tortured, rejected and condemned him, putting him to death on a cross.

In faith communities, we gathered and heard the new commandment to Love one another. As faith communities, we gathered and remembered Jesus utter those words of love, 'forgive them, Father'.

Now the light of Easter blazes into all the dim corners, defeating death's sting. Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" (John 11:25).

Jesus has overcome the grave, conquered death and sin, yet questions persist: What are we to do with this not-yet-ness of our current reality when our hearts are still broken and heavy with grief?

The historical truth of the resurrection and its incredible future promise doesn't erase our need to grieve nor hush our songs of lament. No. Jesus is with us here too, a man of sorrows, well-acquainted with grief, whose face, too, knew the sting of tears (Luke 19:41; John 11:35).

As we can discern from scriptures, the disciples carried a lot of emotions with them in the season after Jesus' death and resurrection. Surely they held sadness, and certainly fear. In the gospel passage from Mark, we hear clearly that the women who came to the tomb and heard the message that Jesus would meet them in Galilee, they were overcome with fear and silence.

Moreover, as we read Peter's message to Cornelius and his household, they clung to hope, for they worshipped one who defeated the power of death! The baton has been passed. Jesus isn't physically present but Jesus' disciples have been given a massive mission to do: continue telling the good news Jesus died to share. God loves you!

Hope is considered one of the great Christian virtues (1 Cor 13:13) and is a sign of God's presence (Rom 5:1-5, 15:13). Hope is the belief that there is a bigger story of God's work in the world, and all of us are a part of the unfolding story of love. It is a story about the future, that God is pulling us toward something beautiful.

Jesus came to show us that God is restoring the world to new life and new creation. Hebrews 6:19 describes the Christian hope as "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." It's as if you dropped an anchor in the future God has promised, and you're slowly being reeled toward it. That's hope.

God's people are hopeful people, so we are committed to the idea that God is still working, even when we can't see it clearly.

We are Resurrection People, trusting in the mystery that is Easter.

With God, beautiful things are still possible even in the midst of our tears, pain, and suffering. Because it is through those tears that we see Jesus and can hear the good news of his resurrection and ascension. We are comforted and rejoice in seeing Jesus through our tears. This is how we live in the already-not-yet.

This season of Easter is 50 days... and we will look into the stories of Resurrection all around us. I am looking forward to it!

May this Easter be a picture, a preview of the puzzling, dazzling, eruptive power of God's new creation. One that is already underway—though we glimpse it through tears. May it be so. Amen.

Let me offer a **Blessing for EASTER Sunday** by Kate Bowler.

And then, Let us look **to JIM QUINDLEN who** will lead us in the prayer for God's people.

Response to the Word –

Pastor Pat

Kate Bowler shares a blessing for this day.

From “For Easter Sunday”

...And isn't it the case that they were
never the same again,
these ordinary people
who had been so cowed,
receiving your Holy Spirit,
emboldened to begin the work you
set in motion,
speaking life and health and peace
to all who would listen?

This is what our newborn church
looks like: Blessed.
Blessed in our fear and inadequacy.
Blessed by your faith in us.
Blessed that we received,
by your own hand, the gift of hope—
the beginning of the end of sin
and of death.
We follow you as best we can
along that downward path
with all the humility we can manage.
You came back to us.
Alleluia.
Alleluia.
Alleluia.

—from Have —from Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day!