

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

'Church at Home' - Easter Sunday 12th April 2020

Welcome

"It is a very different Easter for all us this year, and it feels like so much has been taken away from us. But let us remember that we still have the good news of Jesus; we still the forgiveness of the cross, and we still have the hope of the empty tomb. So I pray that you will be blessed and encouraged as you read through this today." - Rev. Andrew Gill

Reading - Psalm 57:8-11

Awake, my soul!

Awake, harp and lyre!

I will awaken the dawn.

I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;

I will sing of you among the peoples.

For great is your love, reaching to the heavens;

your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;

let your glory be over all the earth

Prayer

Lord of life and power,
through the mighty resurrection of you Son,
you have overcome death
and opened the gate of everlasting life.
Grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory.

Amen

Reading - John 20:10-18

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 round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Easter Message

“When will all this be over?” that’s the question that everyone is asking. “When will life go back to normal?” And of course there is no answer. Experts make predictions and others guess, but we just don’t know when our old way of life will resume. All over the world we are enduring a great crisis and a future that is so uncertain. But this morning I want to share with you why I have *hope*, and how you can have it too.

On that first Easter morning, the followers of Jesus were not asking each other “when will all this be over?” because they had no expectation that life would ever go back to the way it was before. There was no way that they could see that their future would get better. Jesus was dead. And so was their purpose and plans for the future.

So in John’s gospel chapter 20, we find Mary Magdalene alone, isolated, and full of sorrow. The disciples are in a house with the doors locked, surrounded by fear. Jesus, their friend and teacher, the one they believed was the Christ, had been murdered. The most extreme restriction of all was placed on him; death. His life had tragically been taken away from him, and then his body has been placed into a tomb, and was sealed with a stone. Hope, *or so it seemed*, had been canceled.

But then Mary went to the tomb. And saw the stone had been rolled away. She told John and Peter. They ran to the tomb. It was empty. Only the strips of linen that Jesus had been buried in were left. The disciples return home. Mary is alone again. But not for long...

“Why are you crying?”, a voice asked her. She thinks it’s the gardener. But then she hears the voice say something that changes her life forever. With

one word, her sorrow will turn to joy. She hears her name, and immediately she turns and sees Jesus. He's alive! God has raised him from the dead!

God's love is so strong, his power is so great, his plans are so big, that nothing can stop them. Not even death! This is not a made up story. This is a historical event. Jesus is risen from the grave. He is Lord and God. And if he is alive today then so are his promises, and so is my hope.

This is probably the first Easter of my life when I have not met with God's people to worship. The first year I won't be sitting around a table sharing a meal with family or friends. But Jesus is alive today, and so are the promises of his love and his presence. The resurrection shows that you can't lock down the love of God. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Romans 8:38-39)

We are living in difficult days, and for many people each day is a struggle and a battle. But Jesus is alive today, and do you know that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you (Ephesians 1:19-20). If God is strong enough to lift Jesus out of the grave, then he is able to lift us out of our current trouble, and supply us with all the grace we need to wait.

Yes, the future is uncertain at the moment. But the gospel of Jesus Christ shows us the final page. I don't know what will happen tomorrow, or the day after that, but what I do know about the future is that one day I will walk out of my grave just like Jesus did, to live and reign with him. Jesus is alive today, and so is my glorious future.

1 Peter 1:3 says, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"*

If our hope is in God, then no matter how dark life gets, nothing can extinguish our light. Today if you put your faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God then you will have a living love, a living power, and a living hope.

The last few weeks have been a trial, and there may be more to come. You can put restrictions on my life, you can isolate me from loved ones, you can cancel all my plans, you can deal me set back after set back, and give disappointment on top of disappointment. But you cannot limit my hope! I know that my redeemer lives and with my own eyes I will see him.

Jesus is alive. The tomb is empty. So let us give praise to God our Father who has surrounded us with his eternal love, filled us with his mighty strength, and given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

Prayer

We give you thanks, great God,
for the hope we have in Jesus,
who died but is risen and rules over all.
We praise you for his presence with us.
Because he lives, we look for eternal life,
knowing that nothing past, present,
or yet to come can separate us from your great love
made known in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

God of life,
as we celebrate this most holy day
we do so in the shadow of sorrow
because we cannot meet in your house of worship,
or enjoy the fellowship of our church family.
Come quickly, O Lord,
rescue us from this trouble;
we have put our trust in you,
and we will be restored.

God of compassion,
be close to those who feel the ache of isolation,
surround them with your love.
Speak your words of peace into the hearts
of those who worried and anxious.
Keep us safe in the shelter of your care
and watch over all our loved ones.

God of glory,
fill your church with the power
that flows from Christ's resurrection
so that, in the midst of a hurting world,
may we be a signal of new beginnings,
and a channel of your living hope.

Amen