

Easter

Easter Morning

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Jesus is Risen. Not that there was any suspense. It happened a while back. But we re-enact it again every year, because after all its not just Jesus' story, its our story. Or perhaps better put, because it is Jesus' story, its also our story.

In the early Church some compared the crucifixion of Jesus to the baiting of a fishhook. You can see the similarity. Satan like some great sea monster, swallows Jesus whole. Death enshrouds him. But the devil could not digest him. Rather the hook rips up Satan's insides, and the bait was poison to him. So Satan is forced to spew Jesus back out onto the beach like Jonah and the whale. Death could not hold him.

Death can no longer hold us either. Death has not been banished, but it no longer has the last word. Death is no longer our destruction, but our surrender to God's embrace. Death is no longer the end, but a portal on the far side of which stands Christ with arms wide open.

Satan spewed out Jesus who was poison to him. We are called to spew out the demons that poison us, that infect our relationships, that spoil our peace. The risen Christ rolls the rock away from our own souls and casts his light into our darkness, inflames our hearts, breathes new life, his life into our weary too cynical souls.

The Gospel of John gives us several stories about how the disciples learn of Jesus resurrection. Stories we will be hearing over the coming few Sundays. In today's reading, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb early in the morning after the Sabbath to finish the anointing that had been rushed the Friday before. She wants to care for him in death as he had cared for her in life. But she finds the tomb open and Jesus gone. In confusion and panic she runs and tells the disciples the news. Peter and John run off to see for themselves. They see an empty tomb and they believe.

In another tradition Mary Magdalene remains by the tomb, quietly weeping, when Jesus himself appears before her. She does not recognize him at first, but once she hears his voice, she knows it is him.

In still other stories Jesus appears to two disciples leaving Jerusalem. They are heartbroken at how terribly wrong everything had turned out. Not recognizing him at first, they listen as Jesus takes them through the Scriptures, showing them how this whole tragedy had all been part of God's saving plan. They ask him to join them for supper and finally they recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

In yet another story Jesus appears before his closest disciples gathered in grief. One is missing and cannot be convinced by the others that he is back. Its just too good to be true. The next week at prayer, Jesus appears again. Doubting Thomas is with them this time. For Thomas hearing from friends was not enough, seeing was not enough. He needed to touch Jesus at which point he responds "My Lord and my God."

And finally Jesus appears to his closest disciples, Peter, James and John amongst them, who had returned to where Jesus had first found them, fishing in the Sea of Galilee. A stranger on shore suggests that they lower their nets one last time. As in their original calling, their nets strain under the weight of the fish. Experiencing *deja vu*, Peter, jumps overboard and swims ashore.

Death could not hold our Savior, and neither can we. Jesus shatters our expectations for the Spirit of God radiates through him. He has become incandescent. Light from light, true God from true God. The Good News is that Jesus send forth that same Holy Spirit upon us, that we too might beam in the light of God, that we might be brighten the lives of those around us and to a world that sometimes seems to grow only too cold and dark.

May we recognize the divine light of the risen Lord, already gleaming within us. May we proclaim the divine life of Christ that dwells glows within our hearts. And may we tap into the creative Spirit of God to live lives of vibrant faith, steadfast hope and boundless love with arms wide open.