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Worship
April 18, 2021

GATHERING

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS
PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Call to Worship

Pastor: Come, people of God, and worship the Christ.

Reader: Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.

Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit, there is no deceit.

Let us come and worship the Christ who forgives sin.

Opening Hymn – “New Creation”

Greeting

P The peace of the Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P May the risen Christ fill us with life, light, and hope.

C Thanks be to God. Jesus is risen. Alleluia! AMEN.

Hymn of Praise – “Easter Alleluia”

THE WORD

First Reading

Acts 3:12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, ‘You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

'And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to us.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

Psalm 4

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

Answer me when I call, O God of my right!

You gave me room when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame?

How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

Selah

**But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.**

When you are disturbed, do not sin;

ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

Selah

Offer right sacrifices,

and put your trust in the LORD.

There are many who say, 'O that we might see some good!

Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!'

You have put gladness in my heart

more than when their grain and wine abound.

I will both lie down and sleep in peace;

for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to us.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Psalm Response - "*Lord, Let Your Face Shine Upon Us*"

Gospel Reading

Luke 24:36b-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to us.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

3rd Sunday of Easter, April 18, 2021. "The Witnesses."

In Luke's Gospel today, Jesus challenges the disciples to go into the world and proclaim the good news of repentance of sins and the resurrection to all nations. We will read of that challenge throughout the New Testament. Throughout the resurrection appearances, Jesus is challenging the disciples and the Church to be witnesses; to be those who tell of the good news of The Risen Christ; of a God who is the God of life and one who offers forgiveness of sins and new life.

Yeah, I know, that word—that phrase—go forth and tell all—well to be a witness, just sends shivers up and down our spines. The word conjures up images of Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses walking up your sidewalk to ring your doorbell. We Lutherans like to believe that we have a very tough time 'witnessing' to the Risen Christ, but we also remember that witnessing to Christ is a command of Jesus and so we go ahead and do our best. And when we do our best truly amazing things take place.

First of all, when we take some time and figure out what Christ is saying, he is saying when someone opens the door to their story of faith listen, when they are finished, don't be afraid to share your story of faith. When I was in my first parish in Montana, the national Church had developed a program called Word and Witness. It was a great program—had to be for me to remember it after all these years. It taught the participates how to listen to the stories of others as they shared their sorrows; their joys; their hopes; their doubts; their fears; and then help us to share our stories of faith in those circumstances. It taught us when to know other people are opening the door for us to share our faith—and it wasn't very scary, really.

Word and Witness reminded us that in sharing our faith story with another, we are called to use God's gifts of love, sensitivity, and compassion. Arrogance, self-righteousness, and the like are not the attitudes for sharing the faith, and how God has touched your life. Those who put down others because they don't believe Christianity in exactly the same as they, are not the

best witnesses for the risen Christ. Witnessing involves listening to another's story; witnessing means being always ready to share your story of faith with another. Being always ready to offer words of hope; forgiveness; and the calmness of God's presence here and now. So how do we do this: A number of years ago, a pastor shared this story: As one Lenten service came to an end, the pastor's nine-year-old daughter told him that there was a woman crying in the back of the church and she asked her dad to see her. He went to where the woman was sitting and crying. He recognized her immediately. Her young husband had died quite suddenly just a couple of weeks before. He had her husband's funeral service just 8 days before. The husband had been 39. The pastor said nothing and just put his arm around her and they sat in the church for some time. Finally, she told him that she was OK for now. Afterward, she would tell everyone she could think of, that, that night when she was alone and deep in sorrow, God sent her someone. When was the last God sent YOU to someone who needed His presence?

Witnessing is shown in love and compassion: In the old World War II film; "The Big Red One," the story is told of five men of the Big Red One who survive the European War. Toward the end of the film, there is a scene of great tenderness, compassion, and pathos. It is a beautiful piece that speaks volumes about compassion and tenderness in a time of horrible darkness. At this point in the film, the soldiers liberate Buchenwald Concentration Camp and from one of the barracks comes Lee Marvin who plays the sergeant in the film, and he is carrying a body of a young boy—really a skeletal figure in rags. He carries the boy to the commandant's house and lays him on a soft bed with a pillow. There he gives the boy some water and food. They leave together and he carries the boy a short distance to a near-by river. There they sit. For the first time the boy smiles, and eats a little fruit. As Lee Marvin picks the boy up and puts him on his shoulders, there the boy dies—but it is clear that he died in the arms of a man who took time to love him in the last moments of his life. When was the last time God send us to bring love and tenderness to one in their last moments? Probably not that long ago. All of these times remind us that Christ meets us where we are in our lives journey, and he reminds us that we are called to sometimes meet others in the most difficult times of their lives.

Thus, we are all proclaim-ers, witnesses of one type or another; every moment and in everything we say or do, inside and outside of the church, we tell others about what it means to a Christian person. William Barnes, theologian, and professor of the New Testament says it this way: "In like manner all Christians are witnesses for Christ. They are evidence of his mercy and love, and should live that others may be brought to see and love the Savior." How do others see Christ in what we say and what we do? Amen.

Hymn of the Day – *Lord, You Give the Great Commission*

Affirmation of Faith

We are an Easter People! We proclaim our belief in a God of life; in the image of the Creator, we are made. With God's Spirit woven into the fabric of our being we are called to be caretakers of the earth and to bear the life-giving energy of the divine.

We are an Easter People! We proclaim our belief in Jesus Christ, sent by God to be a living example of God's desire for the world. We believe that in Jesus, the powers of darkness and death have no claim over us, that our broken lives find healing in God's compassionate mercy. Jesus is that compassion and mercy risen and alive in the world today.

We are an Easter People! We proclaim our belief in God's gift of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit empowers us be the light and life of Jesus in the world. This Spirit is the vitality of God's embrace active within us through what we do and what we say.

Thanks be to God for life and new life! Christ is risen! Alleluia! AMEN!

Prayers of the People

P. As we are alive in Risen Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we dare bring our prayers before God who has promised to hear us and to respond in steadfast love.

(A Brief Silence)

P. Living God, while we celebrate your resurrection, we still find ourselves full of questions, and at times, doubt. So, Lord we ask that you would open our hearts and minds through the Scriptures, through listening to your quiet, still voice that comes to us in times of silence when we listen for your word for us. Help us Lord to embody what it means to bring your word to the world through what we say and what we do. Hear us O God:

C. Your mercy is great.

P. God of all, the peoples of the nations hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness and they call on you for guidance and strength. Answer their hopes with the strength of your peace, the gift of faith, and the grace of your hope. Give insight to the leaders of nations and factions that they would lead their people in justice and peace. Hear us O God:

C. Your mercy is great.

P. Healing God, you hear the cries of those in need and you answer them in their distress. Surround those who are sick and suffering with your compassion, and use those medical personnel and care-givers that you have called to care for the ill to aid you in bringing healing and hope to those in need. Hear us O God:

C. Your mercy is great.

P. Lord, here at Bethany, we would ask that your Spirit guide the search for a new pastor for your people here. Bless our Call Committee with the spirit of discernment as they ponder those who believe that God is calling them to a new congregation in Scottsdale, AZ. Hear us O God:

C. Your mercy is great.

P. In the hope of new life in Christ, O Lord, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Offering

Offertory

Prayer of Blessing

P Let us pray:

C God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these gifts which we have received from your generous hand. Use them to bring your blessing into the lives of others. AMEN.

MEAL

A Brief Confession

P In the power of the risen Lord, we make our confession to God.

C Gracious and forgiving God, we seek your pardon for actions that have caused harm; for the lack of action that could have been an expression of your love. Forgive and heal us Lord.

P We rest in the mercy of a compassionate God. We are an Easter people; we are a forgiven people.

C Thanks be to God. AMEN.

Communion Dialogue

P The Lord is risen!

C We have seen the Lord!

P Lift up your hearts, people of God.

C We lift them to the Risen Christ.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C We offer our thanks and praise to the One who gives us new life.

P On the night he was betrayed ...

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 and the power
and the glory, forever and ever. AMEN.**

Communion Invitation

P: Come to God's table; be fed and satisfied.

C: We come to feed our spirit and be in the presence of God.

Communion Music

Communion Blessing

P: Let us pray:

C: Radiant God, may your Word take flesh in us that we may be your holy people. May this meal empower us to better be your loving servants. AMEN.

SENDING

Benediction

Pastor: May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ fill you with every good blessing. Amen.

Closing Hymn – “Alleluia! Love is Alive”

Dismissal

Paster: Go in Peace...to live and serve in the way of the cross.

Response: Thanks be to God.

(To watch the videotaped version of the worship service, click the link below)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt8qX94ICK-omDHSc71en4w>