



Fourth Sunday after Easter Sunday, May 12th, 2019

In Celebration of Women: Easter Resurrection Taming the Powers:



“Hidden Figures”: the story of Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson and Mary Vaughan and their struggle for recognition as Black Female mathematicians in the NASA Space Program

The Easter season of 50 days which spans from Resurrection Sunday to Pentecost is not just about the continued presence of God among us, despite human attempts to be rid of Him/Her. Easter is equally about the new regime or order of life that overcomes death, in all its forms. In Easter then, we celebrate the opening up of new human futures, new human possibilities and the slaying of broken habits and world views. To quote the theologian Paul Ricoeur, in his essay *“Spero ut intelligum”* (I hope in order to understand), “Because the Resurrection turns our attention to the future and enables genuine hope, it establishes a “new law, the law of superabundance, the superabundance of sense over non-sense”.

Today, we celebrate Mother’s Day. Traditionally, it has been an attempt to dignify women – perhaps well meaning – but inadequate. Its danger has been and remains, to locate woman in terms of their biology, to reduce women to their reproductive role – rather than to hear from and see women in their fullness, in their completeness as human beings. Applying Ricoeur’s insight about resurrection as superabundance, Christian faith, in keeping with its own ethos, should inspire a broad and liberating view of women and womanhood in the world.

GATHERING

Our Sunday Morning Group members will be handing out flowers to our female members of the congregation as they enter.

Announcements

Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;

who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;
for God takes ordinary things;

and makes them extraordinary.

We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We have lit the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus
and what he represents

is sometimes strong,

sometimes weak,

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate

Christ breaking the bounds of death:

freeing people to become people

women to become women

men to become men

Completely, comprehensively

**Hymn: Christ is Risen! Shout Hosanna! (TiS 394, Ode to Joy
(152), Brian Arthur Wren)**

The Peace

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

An Opening Prayer, “Open to God’s Future” and some Prayers of Thanks to God, for Life and Those who have Loved and Influenced Us.

Being religious and being Christian are quite different things: in fact, most of the time they are at odds with each other. Being religious is usually about preserving tradition, grasping hold of rules that give us a sense of order about things. Being Christian is about hearing and responding to Jesus, not tradition, nor rules. Being Christian is about embracing the resurrection and that to which resurrection points: a new future marked by life for *all* people. Being Christian is to be daring, to be courageous, to travel on God’s shoulders, reaching forward. Below, is a prayer that arises from our Gospel reading – John 10:22-30, which poses the question about *hearing, really hearing Jesus*, not simply tradition and rules.

Who are you? they ask.
Tell us plainly, are you he
who God is sending?

***You’re not serious,
he answered them. I’ve told you,
but you won’t believe.***

You aren’t interested
in what I have to tell you,
buried in your tradition and rules
so stop pretending.

***My sheep hear my voice,
they listen to my teachings
and they follow me.***

I give them my life
and so we walk together
towards God’s kingdom.

***They need have no fear;
I hold these sheep in my hand.
God gave them to me.***

We act together,
the Father and I; working
to bring life and hope.

Amen

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

A Poem by Sarah Kim

Anecdotal Insights about Women

When I was growing up, there were no women in orchestras. Auditioners thought they could tell the difference between a woman playing and a man. Some intelligent person devised a simple solution: Drop a curtain between the auditioners and the people trying out. And, lo and behold, women began to get jobs in symphony orchestras.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice, Supreme Court, USA

There will never be a new world order until women are a part of it.

Alice Stokes Paul (January 11, 1885 – July 9, 1977),

(American suffragist, feminist, and women's rights activist, and one of the main leaders and strategists of the campaign for the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits sex discrimination in the right to vote)

Women are nothing but machines for producing children.

Napoleon Bonaparte

Acts 9:36-43 (The Message)

Peter is like Jesus and Jesus is like Elijah and like Elisha and all are like God: they raise the dead to life. Whatever history may lie behind the story in Acts, it certainly implies a claim to continuity. Was Dorcas/Tabitha a significant foundational leader in Joppa? Probably. Was there such a raising? Many remarkable things happened. This may have been one of them. What is significant here is that, it is the raising of a woman, a good woman, and quite probably, a leader of the Christian community. Stories of raising the dead to extend lives before death at a later stage, easily evoked notions of resurrection, though that was understood as more than temporary reprieve. They also symbolised hope. The good news is about bringing life where there is death, love where there is hate, healing where there is brokenness. The greater wonder today is when we can see people stand on their feet, communities make their way out of traps of poverty, enemies move towards reconciliation, despairing people find meaning again

36-37 Down the road a way in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, "Gazelle" in our language. She was well-known for doing good and helping out. During the time Peter was in the area she became sick and died. Her friends prepared her body for burial and put her in a cool room.

38-40 Some of the disciples had heard that Peter was visiting in nearby Lydda and sent two men to ask if he would be so kind as to come

over. Peter got right up and went with them. They took him into the room where Tabitha's body was laid out. Her old friends, most of them widows, were in the room mourning. They showed Peter pieces of clothing the Gazelle had made while she was with them. Peter put the widows all out of the room. He knelt and prayed. Then he spoke directly to the body: "Tabitha, get up."

⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ She opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up. He took her hand and helped her up. Then he called in the believers and widows, and presented her to them alive.

⁴²⁻⁴³ When this became known all over Joppa, many put their trust in the Master. Peter stayed on a long time in Joppa as a guest of Simon the Tanner.

The word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

John 10:22-30 (The Message)

The idea of shepherds and sheep is a romantic and benign one. The reality however was quite different. Shepherding was a fraught and violent business and sheep stealing was always present. The question for the early Christian community, which itself was weak and at risk, was who was going to be picked off, stolen by the false-shepherds, the imposters, claiming to have Christian authority. As we move backwards through the passage, we can see how these issues have emerged. From reassurance that the sheep would not be stolen (10:28-30), we move back to the assertion that the *real* sheep hear and recognise the voice of the true shepherd (10:27). Then 10:26 asserts that those who refuse to believe do so because they do not belong among the sheep and never really did. There is a motivation here which is disturbingly sectarian, self-assuring and self-serving: the real sheep stay, the false ones don't. But equally, there is an openness, with no desire to embark on a rampage cleansing the community of 'heretics' and the like, but a willingness to accept the processes as they play out, with people self-selecting. So, these words are not licence for 'waging war' but, the contrary, invitation: "here is the Son, offering the life from the Father".

²²⁻²⁴ They were celebrating Hanukkah just then in Jerusalem. It was winter. Jesus was strolling in the Temple across Solomon's Porch. The Jews, circling him, said, "How long are you going to keep us guessing? If you're the Messiah, tell us straight out."

²⁵⁻³⁰ Jesus answered, "I told you, but you don't believe. Everything I have done has been authorized by my Father, actions that speak louder than words. You don't believe because you're not my sheep. My sheep recognize my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them real and eternal life. They are protected from the Destroyer for good. No one can steal them from out of my hand. The Father who put them under my care is so much greater than the Destroyer and Thief.

No one could ever get them away from him. I and the Father are one heart and mind.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: I will sing (TiS 233, Blaenwarn 590, Francis Harold Rowley)

A Film Clip from the 2016 Production “Hidden Figures” (1:18:26 – 1:24:15)

In 1935, the NACA (National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, a precursor to NASA) hired five women to be their first ‘computer pool’ at the Langley campus. As one senior manager said, "The women were meticulous and accurate... and they didn't have to pay them very much," While they did the same work as their white counterparts, African-American ‘computers’ were paid less and relegated to the segregated west section of the Langley campus, where they had to use separate dining and bathroom facilities. They became known as the "West Computers". Despite having the same education, they had to retake college courses they had already passed and were often never considered for promotions or other jobs within NACA.

“Hidden Figures” is about what the name suggests: the ‘hiddenness’ of three young Afro-American women, engaged in the NASA Space Program, some years later. Our clip focuses upon one of them, Katherine Goble (her real name - Katherine Johnson), a talented mathematician who struggles against both sexism and racism. In our clip, Goble experiences very directly the opposition of her superior, head engineer Paul Stafford, to her meaningful inclusion into the Space Task Group, as they take up the challenge of calculating the mathematics of the re-entry of John Glenn’s 1962 circling of the globe.

Some Thoughts about Women and Womanhood

Offering

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Annette Burne and a few of the young people will lead us in prayers for women, and the world.

Closing Hymn: The Lord is My Shepherd (TiS 659, My Shepherd, Brian Boniwell)

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ resurrected opens up a new future
Trusting us to join him building a new world

Our service has ended
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

***In the name of Christ
Amen***

Sung Blessing: May the feet of God walk with you (TiS 779, Aubrey, Robin Mann)

Musical Postlude

Organist

