



## Sixth Sunday in Easter Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### “Peace as Development of People”: An Expression of Easter Resurrection

#### GATHERING



The Season of Easter is marked by the conviction of hopefulness grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a sense, I have often thought of “living in Christ” as an attempt to make resurrection real, in the way we think about the world and the way we act within it. In theology we call this thinking and living in Christ, “anticipations of resurrection”. The Christian community is a community that anticipates resurrection of the world, a community that gives expression to new ways of living, a vanguard of what a resurrected world would look like and be. During these last weeks, whether aware of it or not, we have in fact been thinking about being anticipations, being a vanguard community of resurrection. In Easter 3, we thought about the deconstruction and reconstruction of Peter and Paul, in Easter 4, “In Celebration of Women”, we focused upon the struggle of women in “taming the powers” in our world that denigrates them, and we celebrated their progress. In Easter 5, last week, we reflected upon anxiety as a central component of the human condition, that it is not all bad, but potentially creative. As we examined the story of Peter, waking up to the implications of the Gospel for *equality* between peoples, he stood, anxious, but in his anxiety, as he confronted the conservative Jewish Christians establishment, he broke upon a new truth, fundamental to what resurrected life looks like.

## Announcements

### Greeting

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed!***

The same one, born an outsider;

***the very same one who was executed as an outsider.***

The same one who died;

***the very same one who lives.***

The same one;

***the very same one who brings us to life***

### The Paschal Candle

We have lit the candle knowing

that the Risen Christ overcomes death and despair

and shows us how to live.

**Hymn:** O for a thousand tongues to sing (*TIS 210 Lyngham Charles Wesley*)

### **Opening Prayers: How Not to Let Your Heart be Too Troubled (Michael Leunig Style) - Inspired by Today's Gospel: John 14: 23-29**

The question of peace is never far from our minds: in large part because it is seldom in evidence. Peace usually has two constructs: what we often identify as peace of the soul, meaning internal or personal peace; and peace of the world, meaning external or corporate peace. While we can distinguish them, we can never separate them, since our personal or existential state derives in part at least from the corporate world in which we live, and the corporate or wider peace is built in part at least from the sum total of our personal states of mind. In what follows, the emphasis at first reading may appear to be upon internal or personal peace, but that is not my intention. Rather, that is where I begin, but the final word "home" is a collective thing, a community thing: the place of and for us all.

First you make a small opening just above your heart and then, with great delicacy, withdraw a small part of it ***and hold it to the light for inspection.***

Are you dismayed

to observe its frailty, its flaws?

Just now it made a sound like the indrawn breath of a child  
right before it cries.

In that moment it discovers  
that the more of the world you come to know  
***the more frightening it becomes.***

And not just fear, but guilt, harsh as lightning  
worry, grief, regret – all add their aching; you want  
***to hold your heart tighter in its trouble, but can't***  
with tighter grip calm down the trembling.

Yet just when  
you might despair, you recall His promise and challenge;

that God's Spirit embraces you  
***and that Christ's peace is yours to claim***  
so you may overcome fear  
so that you may live daringly, courageously.

They – the Spirit and Christ – are there like two more hands  
each gentler than your own, holding your heart with you;  
comfort and strength unfold their flower, courage too  
***and you feel your anxiety unravel at last.***

In the warm embrace of Christ's love  
***letting the past be past, mindful of the present moment alone,***  
you rest your peace-filled heart in a safe place.  
You're home in the world

***We're home!***

## **Peace**

God makes peace within us.  
God makes peace between us.  
Let us greet another as a sign of God's peace.

## **Introduction**

## LET'S HEAR THE WORD

### A Way into the Readings: Development, another name for Peace

A new name for peace is development.

**John Paul II, Laborem exercens (On Human Work)**

Knowing, as we all do, that development means peace these days, what human being would not want to work for it with every ounce of his and her strength? So we ask all of you to respond wholeheartedly to our urgent plea, in the name of the Lord.

**Paul VI Populorum progressio (On Human Development), 1967**

The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned.

**Dag Hammarskjold, 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary General of the UN, 1953-1961**

#### **Acts 16:9-15 (NRSV)**

Luke is depicting the spread of the gospel by stages. Whether Paul really had such a vision or Luke, it remains the case that Paul crossed over from Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, to the Greek mainland, or really above the Greek mainland at the head of Aegean Sea. So began the mission which touched cities there to which he later wrote: Philippi, Thessalonica, and, down into the Greek mainland, the isthmus port city of Corinth. Hence, he comes to stay with Lydia, the woman who dealt in purple cloth in Philippi. The story tells us that he met her among some people who gathered to worship God beside the river that ran past the city. Apparently outside the gate was a place of prayer. Paul will have been following his usual practice of going first to the local community of Jews, the synagogue, sometimes designated as "place of prayer". Perhaps Lydia was already a senior person in leadership in that community and will have become the foundation member of the Christian congregation. Paul did not seem to have the problems which others sensed in having women in leadership. Prejudice would eventually win and often still holds the upper hand, though now processed with genuine conviction by some as divine order.

<sup>9</sup>During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."<sup>10</sup>When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. <sup>11</sup>We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup>and from there

to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. <sup>13</sup>On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup>A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup>When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

### **Revelation 22:1-5 (The Message)**

Joan Watson

The Book of Revelation reaches its climax with a vision of hope. The vision represents a reworking of Israel's hopes. The heavenly city has come down from heaven - a new Jerusalem. Ezekiel's wonderful vision of the river which flows from the temple out into all the land, feeding trees whose leaves bring healing and which bear fruit every month (Ezekiel 47:1-12), inspires the opening images of Revelation's final chapter. The author imagines it flowing from God and the lamb, who now replace the temple. It is the life of God flowing like a river - a wonderful image. The tree of life - once withheld in Eden (Gen 3:22) - bears twelve different kinds of fruit, and does so every month. The twelve reflects the twelve tribes of Israel, but in Revelation this is not a closed metaphor as if it were limited to Israel, but an open image which extends to include all. The universal touch is evident where Revelation takes Ezekiel's comment about the leaves bring for healing and adds: "for the nations" (22:2).

Then the Angel showed me Water-of-Life River, crystal bright. It flowed from the Throne of God and the Lamb, right down the middle of the street. The Tree of Life was planted on each side of the River, producing twelve kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit each month. The leaves of the Tree are for healing the nations. Never again will anything be cursed. The Throne of God and of the Lamb is at the centre. His servants will offer God service—worshipping, they'll look on his face, their foreheads mirroring God. Never again will there be any night. No one will need lamplight or sunlight. The shining of God, the Master, is all the light anyone needs. And they will rule with him age after age after age.

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

**John 14:24-31 (The Message)**

Lawrence Peak

Last words are important. It was common in the ancient world to record or to imagine the parting advice of a revered figure. Each of the gospels has something like this, recalling Jesus' final words, including John. What John sketches here is nothing short of the rationale for the Christian and the Church. John pictures those who keep Jesus' word as dwelling places of God and Jesus in the world. Loving Jesus and keeping his word may be variously defined, but at a fundamental level it must mean being a lived-out word of God's offer of love, just as Jesus was. This lived-out word, is never conservative. The image is not of dwelling places huddled away in seclusion away from the dangers, being a city *for themselves*, but of dwellings *in the midst of life* with all its grubbiness, complications and injustice. After all, the God who takes up board and lodging neither wants all our attention as a selfish guest, nor comes to retreat into the armchair. Rather this is the guest who refreshes, encourages us *to come out of ourselves and join in the adventure of creation and challenges of healing and liberation in the world*, and leads us also to rest.

<sup>24</sup> Not loving me means not keeping my words. The message you are hearing isn't mine. It's the message of the Father who sent me.

<sup>25-27</sup> "I'm telling you these things while I'm still living with you. The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you. I'm leaving you well and whole. That's my parting gift to you. Peace. I don't leave you the way you're used to being left—feeling abandoned, bereft. So don't be upset. Don't be distraught.

<sup>28</sup> "You've heard me tell you, 'I'm going away, and I'm coming back.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I'm on my way to the Father because the Father is the goal and purpose of my life.

<sup>29-31</sup> "I've told you this ahead of time, before it happens, so that when it does happen, the confirmation will deepen your belief in me. I'll not be talking with you much more like this because the chief of this godless world is about to attack. But don't worry—he has nothing on me, no claim on me. But so the world might know how thoroughly I love the Father, I am carrying out my Father's instructions right down to the last detail.

"Get up. Let's go. It's time to leave here."

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***



## **A Clip from the Comedy Series “Blackadder Goes Forth”**

The series “Blackadder Goes Forth” was a spoof about the tragedy of World War I. Set in the trenches of Flanders, on the Western Front, it depicts the relationship between Captain Blackadder, Lieutenant George and Private Baldrick. In our scene, we listen to a discussion about how the war began. In a funny but sad way, we hear about how these men find themselves in situation, not of their own making, bewildered as they confront the impending “push” against modern war technology, in which most will die. Often unappreciated, World War I became the point when the modern world ended and the contemporary world began. It upturned everything: the way people saw the world and themselves. It led to a profound cultural analysis of western identity and a rethink by the Christian churches about ‘being Christian’.

**Some thoughts.....**

**Let’s Give: Our Offerings**

**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**

**A Gentle Hymn about the Spirit:** She sits like a bird (*TIS 418, John Bell and Graham Maule, Thainaky*)

**Prayers of the People**

John Egarr

**Closing Hymn: Great God your Spirit** (*TIS 416, Jerusalem, Alan Gaunt*)

**Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is risen!

We see reality through resurrection

We look to the signs of a new world

We live out the signs of this new world.

Our service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

***In the name of Christ***

**As We Leave: May light come into your eyes (TiS 780, Blessing Song, Mandy Treagus)**

**Musical Postlude**

**Organist:**

Jim Abraham