

ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)

EASTER DAY (SERMON)

YEAR A

SUNDAY: 12 APRIL 2020

READINGS: JEREMIAH 31:1-6// PSALM 118: 1-2, 14-24//

ACTS10:34-43//JOHN20:1-18

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Let us pray

On this Easter morning, we sing praises and give thanks, O Lord, that you loved us so much that you gave your only Son so that we might have eternal life. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. AMEN

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!). We say and sing this with such conviction on Easter mornings! The announcement of Christ's resurrection evokes in us a hearty response of faith and joy. This is the heart of our great hope as Christians, that Christ our Lord has conquered sin and death and has secured for us the sure and certain hope of our own resurrection and everlasting life.

But today our Church doors are closed and our choirs and organs are silent and the pews are empty and there is a sense of hopelessness.

However this morning I want us to reflect on:

How can this Easter Resurrection Experience transform our fears us individuals?

How can we as Church so that we can be witnesses to what of our risen Christ has accomplished?

How can we take the Good News to our distressed and despairing communities, and our nation during this Corona virus pandemic?

How can we live in the freedom and joy of the Resurrection and stop hiding behind the physical and spiritual and emotional locked doors of our lives during this time?

Let us turn to our Scripture readings for today as we reflect on this

Our Gospel reading, is John's account of the resurrection.

In John 20v 1 we read "***Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdelene went to the tomb and the stone was removed from the entrance***"

Mary Magdelene the woman in our gospel readings is one of the first women Jesus befriended.

She was one of the most prominent of the Galilean women who followed & ministered to Jesus.

She accompanied Him and His disciples when they went to Jerusalem just prior to His death. She was present at the Crucifixion and now she comes to the tomb to find it empty.

Let us reflect on Mary's actions at the empty tomb

Her first reaction was that of Shock and fear

Mary arrived at the tomb, saw it open and ran back to where Peter and John were hiding. Imagine the tremble in her voice as she tells them, "***They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!***" Imagine the panic she was going through. Who would do such a terrible thing? The Pharisees of course. Everyone knew the Pharisees wanted to get rid of Jesus to the extent that they would steal his body to make a point.

Was this our reaction when we first heard of COVID 19 and more so when the first case in South Africa was announced?

Shock, fear? Will I be one of the statistics? What about my family my loved ones? How will South Africa handle this? How will our Health Departments, Infrastructure and Economy cope with the devastating effects of COVID 19 on our already weak Economy? How would our poorer communities survive this?

Mary's second reaction was that of pain and sorrow

In John 20v 11-15, we read how Mary wept. Why was she crying? She thought the Pharisees had taken Jesus body and had hidden it. Mary like everybody else at that time still believed that Jesus was dead. Jesus, the person that changed her life; her teacher and friend was gone.

Overcome with pain and agony, Mary could not recognize Jesus. Blinded by her tears she failed to see the Lord of life as he spoke to her. She thought he was a gardener.

Maybe you and I or our one of our loved ones (has been) or will be infected or affected by the Corona Virus disease during this challenging distressful time in our country and in the world and we are feeling like Mary Magdelene and we cannot recognize the presence and love of Christ in our present situation. We can't see beyond our pain and suffering and we feel hopeless--- SO HOW CAN WE SING ALLELUIA--

Mary's third reaction is that of joy

In v 16 we read Jesus said to her "Mary" and she turned towards him and cried "Rabboni" which means teacher.

Mary is shouting out in shock and joy Teacher! You're alive! Imagine her touching him, hugging him. Her tears of pain turn to tears of joy! Jesus is alive!

Mary is the first person that Jesus appears to after his resurrection. Mary is the first person that Jesus commissions to go and tell the Good News, and in her joy and excitement she tells the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead.

That is our Good News of Hope Jesus is alive. Christ is risen. Therefore we can sing our Alleluia.

Ours is to take further that love that Christ has started in us Like Mary Magdelene, and like the first disciples in the Book of Acts, we too are moved to spread the Good News. Like Jeremiah we are called upon to speak words of encouragement: words of hope. In Jeremiah 31:1-6, God assures his people, (the Israelites) that he will bring them back from captivity and will make them a great and happy nation again. They shall be restored to peace and joy and prosperity.

CONCLUSION

The Risen Christ is with us, we will not be afraid, He is our helper and our Hope and he will carry us through this this challenging and difficult time in our country and he will once again restore our nation.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!). AMEN