

## Three Reasons to Rejoice and Be Glad

### Sermon for Easter Day, April 17, 2022

*Readings:* Acts 10:34-43; Luke 24:1-12; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

*Sermon text:* On this day the Lord has acted; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

It is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday: on this day the Lord has acted, rejoice and be glad

I'm glad we are back in church. gathered together, glad it is spring and getting warmer—at least a few days ago, glad to see you faces—and looking forward to seeing you more

I have three other reasons to rejoice and be glad.

One, because Christ's Resurrection **confirms** the ultimate unity of heaven and earth, God and creation: we are able to find peace and feel at home in this world.

Two, because Christ's Resurrection **illuminates** the great pattern of renewal that runs through nature, our own lives.

Three, because Christ's Resurrection **reveals** the great mystery of risen life, new creation.

Unity, renewal, risen life. Causes to rejoice, and reversals of ways of thought and feeling that lead us to doubt and despair.

Some modern ways of seeing our place in the cosmos have led to a separation of human mind and spirit from the rest of nature. The existentialist position that argues the human moral sense is an absurd aberration from an immoral purely material nature, or the even more radical position that the human mind and moral sense—the human soul—is an illusion, that we are all so much hardware and software coded to survive.

But lie on a hill on a dark night and watch three stars; sit by a fire as it crackles and send embers up into the air, feel your senses, your whole body alert and alive moving through a forest.

You experience the fundamental experience of feeling connected, related, kin with all creation—as St Francis and indigenous cosmologies and prayers

expresses it. And this intuition leads to a unified understanding of the universe, including the intuition we have of eternity and God. We see it in the long western philosophical and theological tradition that moved from polytheisms to monotheism: with Plato from the many to the One, as in Plato or from the One to the many as in the Hebrew Bible. You feel the coherence of the stars above and the moral law within, as Kant put it.

On this day, rejoice because the Resurrection confirms the feeling of connection, kinship. If the Incarnation is true—if Jesus is God with us—and his death confirms his complete humanity, taking ours to the cross, then his rising from the dead confirms his divinity. It is true not only does God create but care, not only above but with, and as he ascends so will we, so there will be a new creation. He shows the way, demonstrates the thesis, confirms our intuition. We are made for this world—though we need to restore its original harmony. We are made by God—who has a plan and purpose. Confirmed in Christ. Alleluia.

Two, renewal. What I have said so far about the unity of creation and creator can be extended to the great pattern of renewal that runs through nature, our own lives. This is the pattern most of us think of when talking about Easter—it is like spring, a renewal of life after the winter of death. all of nature partakes of this cycle of birth, death and rebirth. We all know and feel this—especially on days like those this past week, warm sunshine, freshly blossoming flowers, just great to be back outside after being cooped up—not to mention covid and the news.

This pattern extends to stories in our lives of illness followed by returning health, renewed strength—as on eagle's wings as the Bible sings. Most of us, if we live long enough, go through such a cycle—indeed even a cold or flu—even covid—mostly illustrates this pattern. And our emotions are similarly cyclical—or we hope they are not stuck on the bottom of the turning wheel. Sadness followed by joy—anger by reconciliation, families, friends, perhaps even enemies. of course the wheel keeps spinning and happiness and success are also temporary. There is a way in which we are tragic, all success no matter how great inevitably followed by a let down, a sense of ultimate failure. We fall short—and that indeed is one definition of sin, missing the mark.

But the Resurrection provides the ultimate example of renewed life and hope. That no matter how difficult one's defeat and sense of failure, how painful the suffering, how cold the winter—think of Jesus being arrested, tried, beaten, nailed to a cross—sacrificing himself for us. But his Resurrection illuminates the truth that hope springs eternal, life will find a way to renew, forgiveness and reconciliation is possible—he greets his friends, not berates or punishes them. Indeed he sends them on their way with a great commission to spread the good

news, to teach what he taught them, to baptize the nations. And here we are today thanks to that message of hope and love. Rejoice and be glad. alleluia.

Wait, there's more. Three, risen life. The Resurrection does not only illustrate and illuminate, it reveals a startling new fact about the plan and purpose of God and creation. And that is it and we are bound for glory, as the old song has it, that this life is not the only life, this chapter not the whole book. So many chapters remain to be written.

Without resurrection grief is unanswered; without resurrection justice cannot be served. Unless those whose lives are cut short tragically, who died too young, without a chance at fullness of life on earth, who were oppressed, suffered, died, surely their life must be redeemed as well. Christ rising from the dead is the sign of that.

What kind of life is the risen life? Not only a life beyond death—whatever eternal life means in a realm or dimension beyond our understanding—but also a more intense life, in this life. For the resurrection of Christ is like eternity entering into time, it is both heightened and deepened life.

Walking in the woods with Zoe this week I looked down and saw a brilliant green clad beetle scuttling over the leaves. I looked again and it was gone—I rustled the leaves until I found it again—and quickly it scuttled away. Its iridescent green was like a jewel, like a sign of another world suddenly appearing on the rusty brown leaves of the forest floor.

That's what the risen life is like. This world shot through with significance, mystery depth. It is the sacramental awareness fo life. Hold out your hands. Take this life, this body and blood, into yours. It is offered by the Risen One.

It is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday: on this day the Lord has acted, rejoice and be glad.

Alleluia, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia.

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