



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

In the name of the loving, liberating, life-giving, and risen Lord. Amen.

The Lord is risen. Let's do that again! The Lord is risen.

That's what I'm talking about. I checked the rubrics, it's okay for Episcopalians to say hallelujah on the Easter Vigil. The Lord is risen. Risen, indeed. So here's a question. If Jesus is risen, why do we go looking for the living amongst the dead? That's the question Luke is asking in our gospel. And we heard a lot of scripture tonight, but in some ways I think we could maybe boil it all down to this one question tonight. Do we still go looking for the living amongst the dead? In other words, when it comes to God, are our expectations too low?

Jesus has been risen, but are we still living with the old assumptions? Our imagination still limited by the old rules and the old conventions? In the face of suffering and brokenness in this world, are we still telling ourselves, well, that's just the way it is? That's just how things are. That's how things are in that country. That's how they are on that side of town. Do we go into the world expecting the worst or do we come expecting new life, new hope, new possibilities?

Mary Magdalene, and the other women, they didn't come expecting a risen Lord. They came looking for a body so that they might anoint it with spices and ointments. They didn't come looking for a miracle. They came to pay respects, to say goodbye, to grieve. Not just at the death of Jesus, but like the other disciples who had fled and gone into hiding, they were grieving the shattered dreams of a new heaven and a new earth, a dream that they just assumed had died with Jesus. And so they are perplexed when His body is missing and they are terrified when two mysterious figures come and appear and ask them, why are you looking for Jesus in a tomb? Did you really expect to find Him here after all that He had told you, after all He had showed you?

So how about it? Do we still go looking for the living amongst the dead? After all we know, after all we've seen, after all we've been reminded about tonight, about a God who made us in His own image. Who loved us, who saved us, who freed us, and when we got lost, never stopped looking for us. Who sent the law and the prophets and in the fullness of time, His only Son, so that He might show us the way, the way of love, the way home.

And after all we heard this past Holy Week, as we saw how the way of love became such a threat to this world, didn't it? Such a threat to the powers that be. Why? Because it included everyone. No one was left out. No one was left behind because we were all in. And so it threatened to overthrow the old pecking orders, the old prejudices, the old rules, the old divisions, the old scapegoats. And so they tried to put it out. Like a fire they didn't want to spread, they tried to douse that flame, not just by killing Him but by making a mockery of

Him, by making a public example of Him in the hopes that we wouldn't dare follow His way of love.

Ah, but the Lord is risen. The resurrection is God's definitive and eternal no. No to the powers of this world. No to the powers of death. No to despair. No to fear. The empty tomb means they don't get the last word, God does. And that last word, it's the same as the first, Jesus. And He is risen so that we might not be afraid to follow in His footsteps. He is risen so that we might find the courage to love one another as He loved us, to love ourselves as God does.

So what about it? Do we, despite all that we know, all that we've seen, will we leave those doors tonight and go into a world expecting the worst? Do we resign ourselves to the status quo? Or do we go looking for the reign of God breaking in? When we pass a homeless person on the street, do we see him as a lost brother or sister? Do we see them as a person deserving our love? Or do we look the other way? Do we shrug them off as a problem to be managed? When we see a lonely neighbor, do we go over and knock on the door and introduce ourselves and hear some of her story? Invite her over. Or do we just assume she'd rather just be alone and keep to ourselves?

When we find ourselves confronted by those who think differently, do we see it as a chance to get to know them, to understand where they might be coming from, to see if we might have a shared value or maybe two? And maybe even some common ground. Or do we walk away, keep to our tribes, to our silos, to our divisions? When we are wronged, do we let them know how much it hurt? Do we risk letting them see us as a person? Do we risk vulnerability? Do we risk forgiveness? Do we defriend them, lock the doors and write them off? Have we made such peace with the way things are that we no longer expect a miracle? Do stories of resurrection and new life and new hope and new possibilities sound to us today like just another idle tale?

George Bernard Shaw said it this way. Some people see the world as it is and ask why. I dream of a world that has never been and ask why not? Why not? Why not a world where no child goes hungry? Why not a world where all people have a bed to sleep in? Why not a world where racism is no more? Why not a world where Democrats and Republicans might see each other as Americans once more? Why not a world where all people are seen and affirmed and valued and celebrated and be loved as the children of God that we all are? Why not?

Oh, some people see the world as it is, and they ask why. We, brothers and sisters in Christ, we see the world as it could be. We see the world as it was intended to be. We see the world as God dreams it to be. And we ask why not? Why not? The Christian life, it's not about why, why me? Why do bad things happen? Why did Jesus have to die? Why does suffering persist? Why evil? And there's nothing wrong with those questions, by the way, we will all ask them at some point in our life if not over and over again. They're very human questions, but they're not God's question. No, the Christian life is not about why, but how. How? How are we going to help? How are we going to participate in the redemption of the world that God has already begun? How am I going to take this life that

I've been given and give it away? How am I going to love as I've been loved, forgive, as I have been forgiven, heal as I have been healed? Not why, how.

And the good news is – the good news is we don't have to have it all figured out. As we heard in our gospel today, we can be wrong. We can be perplexed. We can be confused. We can be in doubt. We can be afraid. In fact, we can even think it's all just an idle tale. The good news is Easter comes anyway. The resurrection happens anyway. God's work of redemption carries on, regardless. We don't have to understand it. We don't have to manage it. We don't have to have it figured out. We don't have to control it. Easter came anyway, and it still does. All we have to do is to open our eyes, open our hearts, and go out into the world and look for signs.

Look for signs, look for stones that have been rolled away. Look for tombs left inexplicably empty. Look for garments on the ground, empty. Looking for all the signs of new life and new hope and resurrection that God is already doing out there in the world and then join with it, partner with it, build upon it, fan its flames until the light of Christ burns so brightly, so brightly once more that it overtakes the darkness forever.

Are you ready, Donovan? Because that's the movement you are about to get into. That's what you're about to be baptized into. But make no mistake. Make no mistake, we need you. We need your fresh eyes. We need your new imagination. We need your willingness to challenge us, to push us, to remind us whenever we get jaded, whenever we set our sights too low, whenever we get held back by the way things are, we need you to stand up and say, why not? Why not? Why not, my brothers and sisters? Stop looking for the living amongst the dead.

He has been raised. Amen.