

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

SECOND SUNDAY of EASTER

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We come in anticipation.
All: For he has risen! He has risen indeed!
One: We come in hope.
All: For Christ is with us; death no longer holds him.
One: We come to rejoice.
All: For Christ is with us, new life to offer.
One: So, come in celebration, to worship and praise.
All: For he has risen! He has risen indeed!

***OPENING HYMN** "The Day of Resurrection!" GtG 233

- 1. The day of resurrection!**
Earth, tell it out abroad,
the Passover of gladness,
the Passover of God.
From death to life eternal,
from sin's dominion free,
our Christ has brought us over
with hymns of victory.
- 2. Let hearts be purged of evil**
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light,
and listening to his accents,
may hear, so calm and plain,
his own "All hail!" and hearing,
may raise the victor strain.

3. Now let the heavens be joyful;
let earth its song begin;
the round world keep high triumph
and all that is therein.
Let all things seen and unseen
their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord has risen,
our joy that has no end.

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

We celebrate in faith, O Lord, the good news of Christ's victory over death, his victory through resurrection. Raised to new life, he blesses us with his presence. Yet crucified, he convicts us of our sins. We are ruled by fears more than faith, by hostility more than peace, by a sense of failure more than feelings of accomplishment and victory. Forgive all the ways we have failed you and all the times we have turned from you. Even through the power and grace of the resurrection, reclaim us and remake us and redirect us, that we may embrace the way of new life and live following Christ; in whose name we pray. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from II Corinthians 5)*

One: The good news is this: that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to God, not counting our sins against us."

All: **Through Christ's death and resurrection, we are transformed, for "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"**

One: So rejoice and be glad.

All: **For in Jesus Christ we are renewed, we are loved, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!**

***THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING John 20:19-31

JOHN 20:19-31 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: "Open Our Eyes" SF 2086

**Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch him,
and say that we love him.
Open our ears, Lord,
and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus.**

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SERMON "What Scott Calvin – and Thomas – Learned" by Pastor Bill Vincent

She is short, and looks so young...to be so wise. It helps that she is over 1200 years old...and is an elf. Her name is Judy, and she is a character in the movie "The Santa Clause."
(I know: "A Christmas movie?" But stick with me.)

Scott Calvin is a businessman and divorced father. Due to the unfortunate and accidental demise of Santa at his residence on Christmas Eve, Scott Calvin himself becomes Santa Claus.

After amazingly delivering all the gifts – with the help of eager reindeer and his eager son, and a magical bag of presents – Scott Calvin finds himself at the North Pole and Santa’s Village, where he can’t believe what is happening.

As he confesses to Judy, “I see it, but I don’t believe it.”

Judy, with a light laugh, comments, “You’re missing the point.”

“What is the point?” Scott asks.

To which Judy responds, “Seeing isn’t believing. Believing is seeing.” Then she reminds him of all the children who haven’t seen, yet just...know.

“Seeing isn’t believing. Believing is seeing.” A flip to the perspective we typically adopt. We are too often like Thomas himself: “If I don’t see it, I won’t believe it.”

But Judy has a point.

And so too, I believe, does Jesus (surprise! surprise!).

We move to the story of another father and son.

The father and his three-year-old son are playing with the ball on the garage floor, rolling it back and forth to each other.

The young son is having a blast.

The father – not so much.

The father feels the weight of the world upon his shoulders, and feels like a failure, like he can’t do anything right.

So the laughter of his son is an irritant and the floor of the garage is the last place in the world he wants to be.

Until the father has a talk with himself – internally, of course – and remembers, and reaffirms, that the weight of the world is not on his shoulders, and that God loves him and embraces him as a child of God.

And in that moment – and in that believing – the father sees his son through different eyes: sees his son as a child of God as well, and sees how precious is this time together with him.

Seeing isn’t believing. Believing is seeing.

In our Assurance of Pardon this morning, we affirmed, “*if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.*” As Paul notes additionally, “*we even once regarded Christ from a human point of view, but we do so no longer.*” (II Corinthians 5)

Because we believe that “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to God,*” we see Christ – we see ourselves, the world, life – differently. Through a new lens: the lens of believing.

Now it is crucial to point out: the new perspective does not create a new truth; we do not create what we want to believe is true. Just because I believe in the horse I put \$100 on does not mean it will win the Kentucky Derby.

Belief is not a magic wand that creates a reality that did not exist before.

Belief is a lens that allows us to see a reality we could not see before.

And in seeing, act on it and live into it.

And yes, it makes a difference in what – in whom – we believe.

Earlier in his gospel, John writes “*God so loved the world that God gave the only Son, that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.*” (John 3:16)

For John, eternal life is not something simply in the hereafter, but in the here and now. Eternal life is something we can have and experience here, now.

Believe in life eternal, and life – and hope – will spring eternal, even now.

“*I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*” (John 10:10)

Life that can be had – experienced – here, now...even in the midst of war and devastation, division and the waste of life.

If we believe God’s hand is at work, then we will see God’s handiwork.

So, how is it that we come to the point of believing without seeing...all in order to see?

Clayton Schmit reminds us,

Jesus promised...to send an advocate, a counselor, to aid us in our understanding of mysterious things of faith ... The human mind wants evidence. The heart needs deeper assurance. John knew that ultimately evidence was not enough. The Spirit is needed... In the last analysis, to own the mystery of resurrection – and to see with the sight of faith – is a gift of grace. (Feasting on the Word, Year A, Vol.2; “Homiletical Perspective,” p.399)

It is a gift.

But what can *we* do? Are there things we can do to make our receiving that gift more likely?

I believe there are.

And we can start with hearing the witnesses: hearing their stories.

Hear the story of Thomas, who doubts and questions, and still arrives at the affirmation, “*My Lord and my God.*”

Hear the story of Peter, who denies knowing his Lord three times, and is then forgiven by that same Lord, and empowered to carry on that good news.

Hear the story of Mary, who gave birth to this man, and saw him die an excruciating death on a cross; and stuck with it, to support and encourage the community enlivened by a resurrected Lord.

This is where you and I come in, for each other: in relationship, in community.

In our earlier story, Scott Calvin still had a hard time believing. But his son always believed. And, even though it was at times strained, Scott stayed in relationship with his son. And Scott eventually came to believe, and to see, because his son always believed, and saw.

And Thomas – for all his imagined faults, even as we refer to him pejoratively as “doubting Thomas” – Thomas stuck with the relationship. We do not know where he was that first night, but he did not abandon the community; he stuck with it, he stayed connected. Until he came to that point where he could proclaim, “*My Lord and my God.*”

I was with a father who was distraught. His daughter was gone, and they did not know where. He was in agony. And he was not sure he could hold on; he was not sure he could have faith.

And in the midst of his dire situation, I was moved to say, “Well, then, I’ll just have to have faith for you.”

Now, I know that doesn’t make sense. If *I* am to have faith, it has to be *my* faith.

But hear the truth being spoken here: of the need to support and encourage one another; the need to shore up the faith of another.

For at some time all of us may struggle to believe, may not be sure we believe. But there is something to be said for the fact that I’m here: here in the community of faith; here, present (as best I can) to the relationship; here in the time and the place where, if faith is contagious, I might just get infected.

(And this is a good kind of infection.)

And this is why we go out beyond this community into the greater community and the world. By our presence and our seeing with the eyes of faith, we have the promise that we will plant seeds of faith in another.

We may not always see the results. We may not always see the harvest.

But remember:

Seeing isn’t believing. Believing is seeing.

To paraphrase: Blessed are those who believe, for they will see.

They will see the Lord standing in our midst, saying, “Peace be with you,” and saying, “Go, and serve.” And if we believe God goes with us, then we will see God do wonderful things for us, in us, and through us.

***HYMN** “We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight” GtG 817

- 1. We walk by faith and not by sight;
with gracious words draw near,
O Christ, who spoke as none e’er spoke:
“My peace be with you here.”**
- 2. We may not touch your hands and side,
nor follow where you trod;
but in your promise we rejoice
and cry, "My Lord and God!"**
- 3. Help then, O Lord, our unbelief;
and may our faith abound
to call on you when you are near
and seek where you are found.**

4. **And when our life of faith is done,
in realms of clearer light
may we behold you as you are,
with full and endless sight.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** *(The Apostles' Creed-Contemporary)*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: God of life...
People: ...shine on us with your resurrection light.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(Contemporary)*

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

In thanksgiving to you, O God, we rejoice in the new life we are offered in Christ. In gratitude to you, we offer ourselves for your will and purposes. Accept our offerings as tokens of our pledge to believe and see, and to work in partnership with you in your world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Open My Eyes, That I May See" GtG 451

1. **Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes; illumine me, Spirit divine!**

2. **Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear.
And while the wave notes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears; illumine me, Spirit divine!**

3. **Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere.
Open my heart, and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, Thy will to see.
Open my heart; illumine me, Spirit divine!**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: Christ is risen!

All: Christ is risen, indeed!

One: We are an Easter people!

Live into the hope of Christ's resurrection!

**All: May our lives be a sign of Christ's life
so that others may come to believe
that the Lord is risen indeed.**

One: May the grace, hope, peace and love
of God our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer
be with you now and always.

And let the gathered people of God say...

All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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