

Welcome on this day of Resurrection! It's good to have you here.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia! Wow. It's good to hear and say those words again. I came close this year to saying Alleluia twice during Lent but caught myself. Safe now.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German minister arrested for participating in a plot to overthrow Adolf Hitler during the second world war. He died in a concentration camp very close to the end of the war, and just before his death he wrote this: "To live in the light of resurrection – that is what Easter means." "To live in the light of resurrection – that is what Easter means."

We are gathered today for lots of reasons. We want to be here; it's Easter so we feel we should be here; or some well-meaning family member or friend has dragged us here. Regardless of how we got here today, I imagine that resurrection is a strange concept for all of us.

We come to church today with different ears for the story of the empty tomb. Jesus's close friend Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb to do what she can do, to tend to the tomb and his body. I imagine that she is numb, not quite understanding and believing the death of her beloved. I imagine many of us here today know about the loss of a loved one, a dream, a relationship or a beloved pet. The disbelief and numbness of separation accompanies hopes for the future.

Mary has this experience: the death of her close friend and the death of his vision. A vision which his mother Mary sings when she is pregnant with him: a dream of a new world order where the hungry will have food, the powerful will no longer have power over the weak, and all the wrongs they live with will be righted.

She is experiencing the loss of her beloved and the loss of their dreams. She goes to the tomb, and she is met with the disturbing realization that Jesus is missing, his body stolen perhaps. She calls on several of the disciples who come to see the same empty tomb. They spring into action while Mary lingers in her grief.

Just as we each handle grief differently, we hear the story of the resurrection differently, but regardless of how you hear the story this morning, I want you to consider one idea: the resurrection matters. Whether or not you believe that it happened as it's described, the resurrection really matters, not only as some afterlife concept, but for our lives today.

Why does it matter? When Jesus is born, God entrusts God-self to our care, and we meet that trust with violence. Part of what we do in Holy Week, the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Day, is to remember the violence that we have done to God's faith in us through the crucifixion of Jesus. What we do on Easter day is to celebrate God's response to our violence - our violence is not met with more violence, but is met with new life in the resurrection, new life given to us and to the very people who abandoned Jesus.

In his resurrected form, Jesus doesn't appear to the adoring crowds of his followers, but to the very people who let him down, the people he trusts and needs, the people who allow him to face crucifixion alone, his closest friends and allies. Yet the first thing he says to the disciples when he sees them together is "Peace be with you." Not, "You have hurt me terribly", or "You have let me down", nor does he ask "Why did you abandon me?", or "Don't you know who I am and what you have done?" but this: "Peace be with you." Peace be with you.

This is Easter: living in the light of the resurrection. The resurrection makes everything new again. The past is brought into the present and healed to make something fresh and new.

Resurrection is all around us. During this spring season we can see resurrection echoed in creation, the butterfly emerging from the caterpillar; the plants sprouting from the seeds which have had to die in order to grow again. Creation is infused with resurrection.

So are we. Through the resurrection God created a new community, a body of people who know what forgiveness feels like and looks like. Can you imagine being part of a group of friends who betray and abandon your group's closest friend? Deny knowing him out of fear? Leave him alone at his death? How would you expect to be greeted by that person if you were ever to see him again? What could ever happen to assuage the feeling of devastation you experience by living with what you've done? What God does through the resurrected Christ is to create this new body of people which knows what it is to be forgiven for abandoning God. Through this forgiveness, God says that we are more than the worst thing we've ever done. This is not the kind of

forgiveness that says, it's ok, don't worry about it. This forgiveness bypasses all of the questioning and accusations and resentments and instead grants God's peace to God's beloved. Peace be with you, God says.

In creating a community which knows radical forgiveness, God's healing power is unleashed on the world. Violence continues as we all know, yet, like God, we are not to combat violence with violence, but with radical love. As a community of forgiven people, we are a people of hope, and we are to look at the people we know anew. We are to offer a fresh look at the world and see possibilities. We are to live in the light of the resurrection, and that is a life lived with hope. Each person is a product of the resurrection, and with God, the possibilities are endless and beyond our imagination.

The resurrection shows that even in the face of violence against God, there is nothing, nothing that frustrates God's desire to be with us and God can take all the broken bits of us and make something fresh and new. Peter – the one who denied Jesus three times – becomes the rock of the church. The other disciples spread the word of the resurrection and the love of God throughout the world. A ragtag band of followers – who scattered at the first sign of real trouble for Jesus – were renewed to start a worldwide movement that exists today, here at St. Clare's and throughout world.

That is the promise, the hope that is created because of the resurrection. The violence that we see every day in the news does not have the final word. The loss that we may feel – a loved one, a relationship, a job, a home - does not have the final word. Everything, even our own death, is made a new creation, a new beginning through God's presence and action in our lives and in the life of the world.

There is nothing but good news here today. Amen.