

Easter Day (A)

April 12, 2020

And the Word became flesh and lived among us. And we have seen his glory.

John 1:18

So why does it take a gospel sentence commonly associated with Christmas to bring home to us the true meaning of Easter? St. John's Prologue, of which this famous excerpt is part, is typically read on the First Sunday after Christmas; and yet here we find it assigned for Morning Prayer on Easter Day.

Why is that? Could it be that this great cosmic ode to the coming of Christ the Word made Flesh that lived among us finds its fullest expression at the other end of the salvation story? Maybe the ultimate truth of that first coming lies finally not in a glowing manger but rather an empty tomb. And maybe it's here, among discarded winding sheets, not swaddling clothes, that our own salvation story begins.

We are, simply put, children of the Resurrection. We are an Easter people. And in this, without sounding proud or boastful, we are also unique in what we believe about God and unique about our relationship to God. All because of this day. For eons we humans had thought that a god was someone merely needing to be appeased, to be invoked out of fear or persuaded by earthly offerings. Our praise was directed hesitantly, fearfully always and only upward.

Yet this day tells us that God, the true God, does not dwell in remote and unattainable splendor, but rather has come down to dwell among us, as a human being. And more than that, this God in Christ, instead of needing to be invoked in fear, calls us instead to live God's life eternally, and with joy! This Christ, this Word made Flesh, has gone to the cross and has died, only to be raised, as the supreme example to us of what life lived in and for God really means. And so on this day, and on every day of our mortal lives, this Christ, this Jesus beckons us to rise with him, until that day when our bodies will take on his resurrected glory, and our souls will know his perfect peace.

I realize this might all sound very basic. It's something we've all heard before. And yet I must tell you it's a message and a truth that I'm clinging to very tightly these days. You probably are as well. If we think about it, our faith is only as good as it informs our thought and emboldens our action in times just such as these. We're only as strong and wise as we allow God to make us when meeting all these painful challenges the ones we face now and the ones that lie ahead.

It's not wrong to cling to something and someone we pray will sustain us and direct us through it all. Honestly, I've done a lot of spiritual clinging in my life; I know you have too. It's a natural impulse, of course, especially in dangerous times. God doesn't ignore those kinds of prayers; nor does Jesus spurn them. Yet how very much more pleased is God with us when, rather than simply clinging to the life that Christ brings, we begin living that life to the full, and with the fullest confidence that we possess all the power, through grace, to bring healing and hope to a shattered world.

And all because of this day. All because we know that the one who died rose again, and that, as a direct result, death has no more power, no more sway over us either. We are mortal, true, as this deadly virus has so grimly reminded us; but it is through our immortal spirit, the spirit of resurrection life, that this crisis and all other human struggles can and will be overcome, with as many rescued as God and our faith gives us the light and the will and the time to do it. Yet no matter what transpires, this same spirit tells that we are in God's hands.

Sometimes I find I'm trying to convince myself of something I only partially believe is true. That's a terrible admission, I know, especially for your pastor; but I have my days, as I'm sure you do. And I seem to be having more of those days recently. In this instance, though, I can be sure. On this day, there can be no doubt. For on this day, the tomb is empty. "Why do look for the living among the dead?" say the angels to the women. "The Lord is not here; he has risen!"

And so, it is for us, who follow to where he has led the way. We go as he has called us. We leave the tomb forever to live his life to the full; and we bring fullness of life to all who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. We rise and we keep on rising through the power of the Word made Flesh, in the risen and eternal one, through the living Christ of all our days.
Amen.

Many Blessings—and a Happy, Holy Eastertide!
Fr. Gordon +