

Worship Service
Easter – April 4, 2021
St. Christopher-by-the-Sea
Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 179, stanzas 1-3

Welcome, happy morning!

Minister: Blessed by God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

People: *And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.*

Minister: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Song of Praise

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you,
we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.*

*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

Collect for Easter

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20 – see lesson insert

Psalm 113 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-11 – see lesson insert

Hymn 193, stanzas 1-3

That Easter day with joy was bright

Gospel: John 20:10-18 – see lesson insert

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;
That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;
That your Name may be glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;
That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;
That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;
That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;
That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest;
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;
May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

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Lord, hear the prayers of your people; and what we have asked faithfully, grant that we may obtain effectually, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Confession

Most merciful God,
We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

Announcements and *America*

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and has promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

Hymn 180, stanzas 1, 2 and 4

He is risen

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins, at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, on Easter, April 4, 2021.

Let's begin with an assignment. At the end of today's sermon, I will say "The Lord is risen!" to which I would like you to respond "The Lord is risen indeed! Amen."

Now, let's continue. On this Easter Day, I invite you to think with me about the word "joy." It is after all front and center today.

Joy is a very happy word, and it is also a very flexible word. We can use it as a noun as in "joy divine," as an adjective as in "joyful, joyful," and as a verb as in "enjoy."

There is no apparent downside to the word "joy." If anything, there is even more upside, as in "overjoy."

Well, what is it exactly that gladdens our hearts on this "joyous" day? And who is responsible? And for whom is joy intended? And is it "intended" at all? What does our Faith tell us?

First, yes, it is intended. It is no accident. It is deliberate. From today's passage from the Prophet Zephaniah: "The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." **(Zephaniah 3:15)** That's pretty clear, isn't it?

And, second, this joy is intended for all. It doesn't matter who we are or what we have done or not done. Again, from Zephaniah, "At that time, I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered ... and I will bring you home." **(Zephaniah 3:19)** All are beneficiaries of this divinely provided joy, the cost of which to us is "Thank you, Lord" in word and in deed.

Maybe the best way to describe joy is to think about what we would do without this gift. What would our life be like without the joy of a fresh start, and a bunch of fresh starts? What would our life be like without hope, without forgiveness, without challenge, without assurance, without promise?

Well, life would certainly be different, and not in a good way. Which means that we ought to be really thankful that there is such a thing as Easter. And it's not a "thing." It's the Risen Christ. He doesn't appear to just a few people or for just a minute or two. In short order, he will appear to the whole world and for all time.

And these appearances won't all be like the empty tomb. The Risen Christ will appear in a whole bunch of ways. And these ways will be tailored to our hopes and needs. These needs reside in our hearts and minds and souls, all of which can be empty at times. And it is this emptiness from person to person that the Resurrection fills with hope and thanksgiving.

Think of those who visited the tomb which was filled with a body of a wonderful person who came to a horrible end. The hearts and minds of those visitors were empty. Hopes had been crushed. Movements had been derailed. Love had given way to hate.

Those women came to the tomb to put a period on the life of a good and decent teacher and healer and companion. They weren't expecting joy. But that's what they found. Or rather joy found them. "Mary, it's me. **(John 19:16)** I am alive and well and with you and with the whole world for all time. Rejoice! No more sadness. Peace be with you. Not sorrow."

Mary, of course, was over-joyed. She had invested her heart and soul in this man. And she thought she had lost him. But not so. The tomb was empty. He was alive and well. And not in recovery mode. But in a leadership mode. He told Mary to tell the others who were vested in his ministry that he was alive and well and needed their assistance.

This passing of the "I need your assistance" baton is what we celebrate today. Not just the Good News of life over death for a few close friends, but of life over death for all. Not confined to a few people in a single place, but available, by design, to all people everywhere, including an Island Community on the Chesapeake Bay in the 21st century, and to all whom those people will share this incredible News. Not just Good News. But Great News. Terrific news. Glad tidings news. Not just joy, but overjoy. Joy in the extreme. Joy for ever. Today's Psalm says it best: "Hallelujah!" with an exclamation mark! **(Psalm 113)**

Sadly this “joy for ever” is in stark contrast to the bitterness which continues to divide us as a nation and as a world. But you and I can’t give up on this “joy for ever.” Easter is more powerful than any bitterness that exists. Maybe the Resurrection of this carpenter from Nazareth isn’t everybody’s intellectual cup of tea. But the power of Goodness is universal. People of good-will have a responsibility to share that good-will. Jesus told Mary in effect, “Get to work. I’m okay. And you’re okay. And you have a job to do. Get at it. I’ll be with you every step of the way.” St. Paul’s version is: “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus!” **(Romans 6:11)**

The Church calendar addresses humanity at its best and at its worst. Crucifixion is for real. It’s one end of the spectrum. But so is Resurrection real. So is new life. So is the joy of a fresh start. It’s the opposite end of the spectrum. As individuals and as communities, we live at both ends of the human spectrum and at every point in between. But we are drawn to the Resurrection end. It’s where we want to be. It’s where we need to be. And it’s where we find the Lord, who tells us, as he told Mary, “Get to work. I’m okay. And you’re okay. And you have a job to do. Get at it. I’ll be with you every step of the way.’

And here we are. Joyful that Christ is risen, that the Lord is risen indeed. And joyful that we are among friends and neighbors who share this confidence. And determined to do our part to pass this confidence on to a troubled world, for which Jesus gave his life.

Our final hymn today is “He is risen.” We’ll sing three stanzas. These stanzas, like all our Easter music, are filled with joy. Here’s stanza one:

He is risen, he is risen! Tell it out with **joyful** voice:
He has burst his three days’ prison; let the whole wide earth **rejoice**:
Death is conquered, we are free, Christ has won the victory.

It’s Resurrection. It’s confirmation that the Good News of Christmas was right on target. What a gift. What a responsibility. **What an absolute joy!**

And, if I might add, what a lovely community we have here. Happy Easter everybody. Get ready. The Lord is risen! *The Lord is risen indeed! Amen.*

Lessons for Easter Day – April 4, 2021

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the people of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says he Lord.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 113

Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the Lord;
praise the Name of the Lord.

Let the Name of the Lord be blessed;
from this time forth for evermore.

From the rising of the sun to its going down
let the Name of the Lord be praised.

The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God, who sits enthroned on high,
but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?

He takes up the weak out of the dust
and lifts up the poor from the ashes.

He sets them with the princes,
with the princes of his people.

He makes the woman of a childless house
to be a joyful mother of children.

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-11

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that since Christ was raised from death, he cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

John 20:10-18

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out, "Rabbi." Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord! And she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Hymns for Easter – April 4, 2021

Hymn 179 – stanzas 1-3

Welcome, happy morning!

“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say:
hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!
Lo! the dead is living, God for ever more!
Him their true Creator, all his works adore!
“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say.

Earth her joy confesses, clothing her for spring,
all fresh gifts returned with her returning King:
bloom in every meadow, leaves on every bough,
speak his sorrow ended, hail his triumph now.
“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say.

Months in due succession, days of lengthening light,
hours and passing moments praise thee in their flight.
Brightness of the morning, sky and fields and sea,
Vanquisher of darkness, bring their praise to thee.
“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say.

Hymn 193, stanzas 1-3

That Easter day with joy was bright

That Easter day with joy was bright, the sun shone out with fairer light,
when, to their longing eyes restored, the apostles saw their risen Lord.

His risen flesh with radiance glowed; his wounded hands and feet he showed;
those scars their solemn witness gave that Christ was risen from the grave.

O Jesus, King of gentleness, do thou thyself our hearts possess
that we may give thee all our days the willing tribute of our praise.

... see reverse for final hymn ...

Hymn 180, stanzas 1-2, 4

He is risen

He is risen, he is risen! Tell it out with joyful voice:
he has burst his three days' prison; let the whole wide earth rejoice:
death is conquered, we are free, Christ has won the victory.

Come, ye sad and fearful hearted, with glad smile and radiant brow!
Death's long shadows have departed; Jesus' woes are over now,
and the passion that he bore sin and pain can vex no more.

He is risen, he is risen! He hath opened heaven's gate:
we are free from sin's dark prison, risen to a holier state;
and a brighter Easter beam on our longing eyes shall stream.