

Service of Holy Communion for Easter 5 – May 7, 2023

Hymn 193 – *That Easter Day with joy was bright*

That Easter day with joy was bright, the sun shone our 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.

O Lord of all with us abide in this our joyful Eastertide;
from every weapon death can wield thine own redeemed for ever shield.

All praise, O risen Lord, we give to thee, who, dead, again dost live;
to God the Father equal praise, and God the Holy Ghost, we raise.

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Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

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.

*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.*

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

Easter 5 Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading – Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

Second Reading – I Peter 2:2-10

Hymn 314, stanzas 1-2 – *Humbly I adore thee*

Humbly I adore thee, Verity unseen,
who thy glory hidest 'neath these shadows mean;
lo, to thee surrendered, my whole hart is bowed,
tranced as it beholds thee, shrined within the cloud.

Taste and touch and vision to discern thee fail;
faith, that comes by hearing, pierces through the veil.
I believe whate'er the Son of God hath told;
what the Truth hath spoken, that for truth I hold.

Gospel – John 14:1-14

Sermon

The Rev. Charles Rowins

Nicene Creed – page 358

*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 Form IV – page 388

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Confession and Absolution – page 360

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*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.*

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.

The Peace – page 360

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Announcements

Offertory Sentence

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and give himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.

Doxology - Hymn 380, verse 4

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Eucharistic Prayer – page 361

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore we praise, you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Holy, holy holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: this is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Breaking of the Bread

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion

Post Communion Prayer

*Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us
as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
And you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Hymn 436 – Lift up your heads, ye might gates

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold the King of glory waits!
The King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

O bless the land, the city blest, where Christ the ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King of triumph comes!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer come! I open wide my heart to thee: here, Lord, abide!
Let me thy inner presence feel: thy grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin;
thy Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

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, 5th Sunday of Easter, May 7, 2023.

Our subject today is cornerstone.

Cornerstone has a precise meaning and a general meaning. The precise meaning is an actual stone block that marks ceremoniously the purpose of a building. Who occupies the building and for what purpose? Often this information is inscribed in a stone block at the corner of a building. Many of you have worked or are working in buildings that feature inscribed cornerstones.

But, what about the general meaning of cornerstone? Well, it means foundation, and it can be applied to people as well as to buildings. What is at the core of our being. What drives us. What compels us. What gives us meaning. Either as an individual or as a community or both.

In our second reading today (**I Peter 2:5**), Peter says, "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious." He is talking here about the Risen Christ. For Peter, Christ was the foundation of Peter's life. It was Christ who gave Peter and others compelling strength. Christ was born for a purpose. He died for a purpose. And he rose to new life for a purpose.

And guess what. Two thousand years later, you and I are proclaiming the same belief. In many different ways, we have included the Risen Christ in our building, our lives. We have identified him, chosen him, as our cornerstone, our foundation, our strength. And, in all likelihood, our decision about a Jesus cornerstone was influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Now, not everyone has made the same choice. Others have different foundations for how they lead their lives. Choosing a foundation is one of the things people do. For example, when we sit down with our children, we encourage them to think about a foundation for their lives.

We share the Jesus foundation, yes, but we also respect different foundation choices. And we emphasize that happy people, successful people, have strong foundations. And we try really hard to be foundations ourselves for our children and our communities. Nations and companies and families and communities of all sorts, without strong foundations, are vulnerable and not as happy as they could be.

Jesus is very clear about this relationship. From this morning's gospel (**John 14:1-14**): "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. ... I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Jesus was not shy, was he? He understood his role in the scheme of things, and he stayed with that understanding up to, during, and beyond his death. He knew his role, and it was to be a foundation like no other. "Spiritual milk" with a kick, according to Peter (**1 Peter 2:2**). "The way, the truth, and the life," according to Jesus himself (**John 14:6**).

One of the exercises recommended during the Season of Lent is to revisit foundations. What drives us? What fulfills us? What gives us satisfaction? Or, more to the point, who drives us, who fulfills us, who gives us satisfaction? In the words of today's **Psalms 31:15**: "Who rescues me from the hand of my enemies."

Yes, our families fit this profile – we hope and pray. But is our foundation broader than just our immediately family? Is there room for someone else? Is there room for the Lord? And are we, am I, a sturdy foundation for others?

For example, are we, as a worshipping community, a good foundation for this Island? We hope so. We think so. We strive to be so. But, could we be doing more?

Well, it starts with us as individuals, doesn't it? Are we as individuals a "spiritual house"? Peter asked this question, and reminded us that we are a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." (**1 Peter 2:5**) We take our individual cornerstones and blend them and offer the blend to others. Yes, we offer ourselves as individuals, but we also offer ourselves as a community, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Is Jesus the only choice? Again, no, there are many foundation options. Jesus is one of them. And, for you and me, in this setting, he is the best option. Why? Because his love is comprehensive. No one is left out. Even if and when we reject Jesus, Jesus does not reject us. How special is that!

Our final hymn today is "In the cross of Christ I glory." This hymn (#441) is filled with beautiful verse. Here's the third stanza: "When the sun of bliss is beaming

light and love upon my way, from the cross the radiance streaming adds new luster to the day.”

“Radiance streaming.” That’s a pretty good foundation, isn’t it? Well worth receiving ourselves and passing this gift along to others. A shared cornerstone, if you will.

And – this is important – shared right now. In this life. This year. This week. Today. Or whenever a person or a people or a nation or a world needs some “radiance streaming.”

We’re used to “video streaming” aren’t we? We might have watched something last night that was “video streamed.” Well, what are the elements of video streaming? There are two: a server and a client.

Well, when it comes to the Good News of Jesus, you are I are now the “server.” We have received content – that would be Jesus – and now we share that content. It’s as if we just saw a live-streamed concert, and can’t wait to recommend that concert to others.

Yes, the Lord is our foundation of choice. The Lord is our cornerstone. Receiving that Lord is a conscious decision on our part. There are other foundations out there. We could pick other cornerstones. We could receive other streamed concerts. But, for us, for you and me, the “radiance” wouldn’t be as comprehensive, wouldn’t be as lasting, wouldn’t be as intriguing, and, yes, wouldn’t be as joyful.

The selection of a life-foundation is a huge decision when we’re building a life for ourselves and when we are guiding children and neighbors and strangers in their search. The Lord is one of the options. And, as far as we are concerned, it’s the very best option.

“Radiance streaming.” According to our hymnal, the author of Hymn 441 was born in 1792. He knew what we know, namely that it doesn’t get any better than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.