

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 3rd Sunday of Easter, April 14, 2024.

If truth be told, you and I have our doubts about the Resurrection of Jesus. This is nothing new. Lots of people have doubts about the Resurrection. This morning's Gospel describes some of these doubts (**Luke 24:38**). Not doubts 20 centuries later, but doubts from the first century. Doubts from the contemporaries of Jesus. Our doubts, if we have them, echo thousands of years of doubt.

But the Good News of the Resurrection persists. Belief in the Risen Christ is alive and well. You and I are proof of that. At least proof of the Belief. Whether our belief is based in fact – that is, Jesus actually did rise from the Dead and appeared to the disciples and continued to teach and heal – is another matter.

There are many who do not believe as we do. And I suspect that there have been times when we have wondered ourselves. After all, we're talking about a miracle. New life. Restored life. Something that is not supposed to happen. Out of the ordinary.

Yes, here we are, proclaiming and giving thanks for the Resurrection and all the difference that event has made in the history of the world, including our lives.

And, you know who else shared this conviction because they were an eye-witness? Peter. From this morning's lesson from Acts: "To this we are witnesses." (**Acts 3:15**)

The witness, the testimony, of these early disciples was brave. The Roman Empire certainly didn't want this testimony spread. There are people in our own generation who don't want this testimony spread. But no amount of suppression, whether in the first century or the twenty-first century has quelled the witness.

That historical fact alone should carry the day. But even more powerful than history on the side of Jesus is our faith in the Risen Christ. How did that happen if it were not true? How does that happen if it is not true.

We're not here because we are drawn to the politics of the Middle East in the first century AD. No, we're here today because at a minimum we are intrigued with

Jesus, and at a maximum we are grateful for Jesus. The Risen Christ is real for you and me. If not cemented, certainly inviting. From First John, “When he is revealed, we will be like him.” **(1 John 3:2)**

Now, it is true that you and I, twenty centuries after the event, do not have a first-hand experience with the Risen Christ comparable to the experience of the first disciples. They could reach out and touch him. According to Luke’s Gospel, the Risen Christ invited people to touch him. Not just spiritually, but physically. “Touch me and see” he said. **(Luke 24:39)**

If this Good News was not true, if it was fabricated, the testimony would have been lost centuries ago. Maybe within days of the invitation of Jesus to touch. But that’s not what happened. The “touch,” the “proof,” the “Good News” entered the hearts and minds of those who trusted the experience of Peter and the others. Their claim should have died had the Good News been a fraud. But it didn’t die. And it didn’t die, not because of Peter’s experience alone, but because of billions of believers since, including you and me.

Maybe we’re not “all the way there” in our belief. But we are curious, aren’t we? We even ask those who believe strongly “How did you get to your point of faith?” Their answers will vary considerably, except for one basic thing. And that is “We are fascinated by this first century carpenter. Not just by his historical birth, life, death, and new life. But by our own sense that God really did become one of us to assure us of God’s Love. And that assurance, through prayer and service and thanksgiving, we get to share.”

Look at us here. From all sorts of backgrounds, with all sorts of talents, with all sorts of hard-nosed questions, we feel the Lord’s Presence. We don’t worship a footnote in history. We worship a Savior. A Savior who is alive and well and eager to lift us up. When we say “Our Father ...” we’re not just citing Scripture, we’re adding a footnote. We’re not trying to fool others. No, when we say “Our Father ...” we are speaking with the Lord. From today’s Psalm (Psalm 4:3): “Know that the Lord does wonders for the faithful; when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.”

In today's lesson from Luke, Jesus says to the disciples "Touch me and see."
(Luke 24:40) He then showed the disciples his hands and his feet. They still had questions though. So, what does Jesus say: "Have you anything here to eat?"
(Luke 24:41).

Don't you love it? A potluck supper becomes an avenue for you and me to receive the Lord. I wonder what dish he brought? Well, of course, he brought himself. And now it is our turn. And here we are proclaiming that the Lord not only lived 20 centuries ago, but lives right now, assuming that you and I sustain our public and private testimony.

Maybe we're not fully there yet. Maybe we have a ways to go. But we're pretty darn close. We're on our way to greet the Lord. He has come to us. And we are in the process of welcoming him, and seeing how we can spread this Good News.

You all, in this special outpost of faith, are excellent spreaders. And that receiving and spreading has been going on for 100 years in this place, and for thousands of years all over the world. What a privilege to be in the company of the Lord and your company. We don't mind the hard work. We don't mind an occasional setback. Because it's not just the company of the Lord that we value. It's the company of one another.

If there was a book entitled Transmitting the Good News, you all, we all, would be a chapter. As individuals and as a group, we receive the Good News. We wrestle with the Good News. And then we accept the Good News, and become custodians of the Good News. We have received the baton and are passing the baton. We are witnesses. From I John: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are." **(I John 3:1)**

Keeping with the potluck supper imagery, we offer a simple but heartfelt thanks. One word: **YUM!**

Well, not just one word. Here's another, more appropriate. **AMEN.**

Morning Prayer – Easter 3 – April 14, 2024

Hymn 193 – 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 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 every 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.

BCP - Page 76 –Easter Greeting

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,
But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive in our sins and
cleans us from all unrighteousness.

BCP – Pages 79 – Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our
heavenly Father, to set forth his praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for
ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and
our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to
worship him, let us kneel or sit in silence, and, with penitent and obedient hearts,
confess our sins that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and
mercy.

BCP – Pages 79-80 – Confession and Absolution

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 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.

BCP – Page 80 - Gloria

O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

BCP – Page 44 – Venite

O come, let us sing unto the Lord;
 let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving
 and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God,
 and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,
 and the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his, and he made it,
 and his hands prepared the dry land.
O come, let us worship and fall down
 and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God,
 and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
 let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,
 and with righteousness to judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

First Reading – Acts 3:12-19

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause;

You set me free when I am hard pressed; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

“You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory;

How long will you worship dumb idols and run after false gods?”

Know that the Lord does wonders for the faithful;

when I call on the Lord, he will hear me.

Tremble, then, and do not sin;

speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.

Offer the appointed sacrifices

and put your trust in the Lord.

Many are saying, “Oh, that we might see better times!”

Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord.

Second Reading – 1 John 3:1-7

Hymn 656 – *Blest are the pure in heart.*

*Blest are the pure in heart, for they shall see our God;
the secret of the Lord is theirs, their soul is Christ's abode.*

*The Lord, who left the heavens our life and peace to bring,
to dwell in lowliness with us, our pattern and our King;*

*He to the lowly soul will still himself impart
and for his dwelling and his throne will choose the pure in heart.*

*Lord, we thy presence seek; may ours this blessing be;
give us a pure and lowly heart, a temple fit for thee.*

Gospel – Luke 24:36b-48

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

BCP – page 96 - The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He 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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
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.

BCP – page 97 – the Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.
Let us pray.

*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.*

BCP – page 97-98 – Suffrages A

Show us your mercy, O Lord;

And grant us your salvation.

Clothe your ministers with righteousness;

Let you people sing with joy.

Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;

For only in you can we live in safety.

Lord, keep this nation under thy care;

And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;

Your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;

Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us clean hearts, O God;

And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Collect for Third Sunday of Easter

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

BCP – page 832 – Prayer for Guidance

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BCP – page 258 – Prayer for Peace

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

BCP – page 101 - The General Thanksgiving

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants
give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness
to us and to all whom you have made.*

*We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by
our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.*

*And, we, pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly
thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips,
but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking
before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ
our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory
throughout all ages. Amen.*

Announcements

Hymn 717 - America – portions of stanzas 1 and 3

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

BCP – page 59 – 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 hast 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.*

BCP – page 59 – The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the
Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn 458, stanzas 1-3 and 7 – My song is love unknown

*My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me,
love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be.
O who am I that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh, and die.*

*He came from his blest throne salvation to bestow,
but men made strange, and none the longed-for Christ would know,
But O my friend, my friend indeed, who at my need his life did spend.*

*Sometimes they strew his way, and his strong praises sing,
resounding all the day hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify" is all their breath, and for his death they thirst and cry.*

*Here might I stay and sing, no story so divine:
never was love, dear King, never was grief like thine
This is my friend, in whose sweet praise, I all my days could gladly spend.*

Dismissal

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

Easter 3 Lessons – April 14, 2024

Collect: O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 3:12-19

Peter addressed the people, “You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way, God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.”

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

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause;
you set me free when I am hard pressed; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

“You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory;
how long will you worship dumb idols and run after false gods?”

Know that the Lord does wonders for the faithful;
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.

Tremble, then, and do not sin;
speak to our heart in silence upon your bed.

Offer the appointed sacrifices

and put your trust in the Lord.

Many are saying, "Oh, that we might see better times!"

Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord.

You have put gladness in my heart,

more than when grain and wine and oil increase.

I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep;

for only you, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Second Reading: I John 3:1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

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

Gospel: Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus stood among the disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

The Gospel of the Lord. *Praise be to you, O Christ. Amen.*