

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

May 1, 2022

RAISED

putting the focus on God

by Drew Downs

*Christ is risen!
Christ was raised from the dead!*

Notice that we don't say Jesus *rose* from the dead. We also don't say that he came back. The resurrection is not the work of Jesus. It is the work of God *in* Jesus.

Even as Christians have fought for centuries over what to do with the nature of Jesus and the Trinity, there is one thing we agree on.

The resurrection is God's doing.

I generally loathe how our theology and liturgical tradition use passive voice to describe how Jesus (and we!) is acted upon *by God*. Because I think we get it twisted.

This is why we need to be clear about resurrections. Because it's a God thing. God is into raising the dead. Which thankfully includes faith and traditions, too.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Spring 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

I am grateful for the opportunity to once again rejoice in the risen Christ! Easter is here! And with it comes the joy we associate with it through spring weather and thoughts of renewal.

The Easter season, like the season of Christmas, is timed for the Northern Hemisphere. Christmas, originally set to the winter solstice, was about hope in the darkest of times. And culminates with Epiphany, right about the time people would recognize the sun rising earlier in the morning.

Easter is similarly timed. So we can witness to resurrections in the world around us. God raises the dead to life; and we get to see it in the birds nesting, trees budding, and flowers blooming.

This also matches our *own* behavior *inside* the church. As we welcome new members and restore those who have been separated from the faithful.

I suspect that the biggest challenge we have as people of faith is how set we are on things always being final. From decisions and traditions to the structures themselves. When it comes to Jesus, we're all about death and resurrection. But when it comes to buildings and institutions, everything about us screams "afraid of dying."

Easter, and the very world around us, screams the opposite. God brings things to life! And so we are being called into God's holy work of renewal.

With love,
Drew

LENT

Spring 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Third Sunday of Easter

May 1, 2022

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.

Reading

From John 21:1-19

"When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea."

Reflection

There are a lot of different parts to this story. And we can totally take on *any* of them and feel satisfied. But the part that always makes me notice it is that part about Peter being naked. It makes me laugh every single time I read it.

Why is it there?

1. Why is he naked?
2. And why should we care?
3. What does this have to do with anything?

Every time, I wonder. Of course, there are so many speculations. It could be anything. It also could be a whole lot of nothing. *But I always want to engage with it.*

LENT

In one sense, the meaning is quite obvious. Especially given what is going to happen in the end. Peter's nakedness will be reflected in his loving interrogation by Jesus: *Do you love me?* In that way, the "real Peter" will be exposed.

It also brings to mind the garden of Eden, when the first humans discovered their own exposure; they felt the need to clothe themselves *and hide*.

It is the third thing Peter does that is most curious, however. He jumps into the sea. And this may be the hardest motive to diagnose with true certainty.

Now, it is likely to be avoidance. Much like clothing himself eliminates his intimate exposure, jumping in the sea avoids the contact with Jesus. Whom he betrayed.

It may also be zeal. Like the stories in the synoptic gospels of Peter asking Jesus to command he walk on water: and he does it. For a few seconds, anyway.

The thing about *both* of these motives is that Peter is not thinking *clearly* as the others are. None of them puts clothes on and jumps in the water. *They* row to shore to hang with Jesus. This is so obvious (and Peter's response so ridiculous) we might mistake this as a picture of right vs. wrong. We might assume Peter is doing something *wrong* here.

And yet we are constantly reminded that Jesus loves Peter, not for being right, but for being himself. He loves Peter for being Peter. Just as in the same way, the nonsense about a "disciple whom Jesus loved" distracts us from seeing how Jesus loves them all.

Every time Peter is in the picture, I know where I am in the story. I know what part I am playing. *Not who I am supposed to be, but who I am*. And that is the zealous goofball who sometimes gets it right. And is sometimes jumping in the sea.

And yet Jesus gives *ME* the opportunity to redeem myself — and express my love.

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