

Resurrection of Our Lord 2018 (B/RCL): "April Fool's & Happy Easter!"

Mark 16:1-8

April 1, 2018

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

"April Fool's!" to Judas who thought Jesus had passed up His chance to be Messiah when He refused to take earthly power. The Rabbi from Nazareth who was betrayed, condemned, crucified, rose again and holds power from on high!

"April Fool's!" to the rigid religious leaders, to the solemn Sanhedrin who accused Jesus of blaspheming God because He said He was the Son of the Blessed One. He's God's Son after all!

"April Fool's!" to the tormentors who mocked Jesus' kingship by crowning Him with thorns, placing a reed instead of a scepter in His hand, draping a purple cloak over his bloodied, raw back, after having stripped and whipped Him. He **is** King after all!

"April Fool's!" to the women who worried all the way to the tomb how they 'd budge the stone from the entrance. It was already moved and posed no problem after all!

"April Fool's!" to the male disciples who thought the ladies were crazy when they came back from their early morning errand of mercy and eventually (not right away) told them that they'd found not a dead body but a young man in a white robe with startling news. The Master **was** risen after all!

"April Fool's!" to the women in St. Mark's Gospel who felt so very guilty, ambivalent, tormented, fearful about passing along the message they'd been given. Despite their initial silence the word got out after all and has been circulating ever since!

"April Fool's!" to Mary Magdalene in the Fourth Gospel we heard last night, "the other Mary" who believed the risen Lord to be the gardener. The supposed gardener was the Gardener of her soul, her *Rabboni*, her Teacher, after all!

“April Fool’s!” to the folks who spread the fake news that disciples of Jesus had stolen His body. The **real** news of the resurrection carried the day after all!

“April Fool’s!” to those who felt dismay in the Garden of Olives during Jesus’ arrest, whose anxiety soared outside the high priest’s palace and Pilate’s headquarters during the Lord’s trials, who were awash in horror at the foot of the cross during His crucifixion, and who experienced abject terror in the empty tomb on Easter morning. “April Fool’s!” because all that excruciating emotional pain was erased in the presence of the Risen Lord later on Easter Sunday.

We know many things have changed over the past 2,000 years, but I don’t think human emotions have. The spectrum of possibilities has always been wide, and the darker end has always felt lousy. Fear makes our hearts beat fast and our palms sweat. Terror makes it hard to breathe. We might have guessed that the news of Jesus’ resurrection would be exhilarating to the faithful women who hiked to the tomb at daybreak to perform their last loving labor for the Lord: the tender washing away of the caked blood, the anointing of the bruised body with fragrant cream, the wrapping of the wounded limbs, torso, head, in a clean linen sheet, the careful tucking of costly spices into the folds of the winding sheet, in hopes of fleetingly counteracting the odor (though not the reality) of decay.

So why weren’t those faithful female friends immediately **thrilled** and **happy** to hear their Master wasn’t dead anymore?? That they didn’t have to play the role of funeral directors since there wasn’t going to **be** a funeral? The news didn’t make them leap for joy because it was **unbelievable**. These women had seen Him suffer for hours and finally take His last breath. They had witnessed him literally expire. “What do you mean, young man, ‘He has been raised’??” We know what we know until we’re proven wrong, right? When we’re terrified, when we’re grief-

stricken, we're not all that open to incoming news of **any** kind, no less news that contradicts what we believe to be the hard truth.

A lot of people in this world can't embrace the resurrection of Christ. To them it's far-fetched, contradicts reason, seems like the delusion of people desperate to find comfort in a chilly, chilling world. To those children of God who refuse to be comforted, God says, "April Fool's! Don't you see how silly you're being? You're **denying** the existence of the One responsible for **your** existence! You're listening to the symphony of creation and assuming there's no Composer. You're viewing the masterpiece of creation and claiming there's no Artist. Yet the resurrection of life is all around you in the springtime; the risen Lord is present in this family of faith, in the Word, in the Holy Supper, and in the last, the lost, and the least, His brothers and sisters."

"April Fool's!" to those who fear that their "Good Friday sorrow," whatever caused it, will sour their lives, making their life song a dirge, ever after. **Christ's victory redeems all our defeats.** If you're not so sure resurrection from the dead is possible, talk to someone who's in recovery from addiction. Or talk to someone who was told, for whatever reason, that s/he had 5 years to live, 20 years ago. Talk to anyone who saw a very real door close, and a totally unexpected one open. There's resurrection all around us, for those with eyes to see, faith to believe.

"April Fool's!" to those who think a grave or a columbarium niche or the earth of the memorial garden or the watery depth of the sea is their loved ones' final resting place. It's not. It's just a stop on a longer journey to a more real and unending Life. This isn't fiction. It's the Good News of the saving death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, in addition to "April Fool's!" we can wish one another, "Happy Easter!" "Christ is risen, alleluia!" "He is risen indeed, alleluia!" Amen

Pastor Mary Virginia Farnham