

**All Saints Episcopal Church Steenrijk,
Chapel of the Resurrection
Willemstad, Curacao**

Easter (A)

April 9, 2023

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

“Tomorrow”

DRAFT

**The Holy Gospel
according to Matthew 28:1-10**

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he

said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The tomb is empty! Let us come and worship our risen Lord, Alleluia. Amen.

A notorious criminal died, but the crimes he committed were so heinous that no one wanted him buried in their cemetery. So the Warden tried his best to find a resting spot for the criminal's body. Finally, in desperation he asked for international help. He got this reply from Israel: 'Yes, we will bury him, but

realize that this is the country that has the world's highest resurrection rate.'

Methodist Bishop Will Willimon says, "There are so many ways to 'explain' the resurrection. The point is, [however,] we can't 'explain' the resurrection. The resurrection explains us!" The resurrection explains why we are such ardent Christians, firmly believing that our future is guaranteed to be with our Lord in heaven no matter what happens to us here on Planet Earth

or what happens to us anywhere else as far as planetary exploration is concerned.

Notice what Jesus tells the women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (the proto-Altar Guild): "Greetings! Tell my brothers to meet me in Galilee." My brothers! The two most important words of this story. My brothers (the remaining Eleven Apostles). And note also that Jesus does not first appear to his 'brothers' but to the (proto-) Altar Guild, the first Altar Guild, [Mary Magdalene and the other Mary]. Why do you suppose Jesus appears first to the Altar

Guild and not to the clergy or to the Vestry or to the congregation? Was Jesus telling us how ‘things work in our world’, that if the Altar Guild says so, it has to be so. And then the Altar Guild is charged by the Risen Lord to tell everyone else, from Peter, James, and John, and Matthew (who is presumably writing this down in his gospel) on down to the rest of the House of Bishops, the House of Deputies, the Vestry, Clergy, and all the other lay leaders and laity. The Risen Lord knew the wisest way to spread the best good news anyone had

ever heard--his first announcement was to the Altar Guild. And they were the ones who would spread the wonderful good news to the others that The Lord was alive and had risen indeed!

Matthew tells us that it's not about "believing." It's about what you do with that belief that identifies you as a child of the Resurrection. The Resurrection compels us to be agents of reconciliation between the Risen Lord and the rest of the world, to be the announcers of the Good News to all the others, that we are not to keep this great Good News secret,

but we are to shout it from the housetops to the rest of the world: Christ has risen from the dead! Being a child of the resurrection does not mean we have everything figured out. When the disciples finally meet Jesus on the mountain in Galilee, Matthew tells us “but some doubted.” That's okay. The resurrection is big enough to handle our doubt. “Thus the same elements of worship, doubt, and little faith inhere in the church after Easter as before.

Whatever the nature of the resurrection event, it did not generate perfect faith

even in those who experienced it firsthand. It is not to angels or perfect believers, but to the worshiping/wavering community of disciples to whom the world mission is entrusted.” (per the New Interpreter's Bible) This is the good news.

<http://nathanmattox.blogspot.com/2008/03/easter-sermon-its-how-you-believe.html>

Methodist Pastor Nathan Mattox says, ‘This is what is exciting. The

resurrection hasn't ended. It is still going on in your life and in mine. We have the opportunity to participate in it by our life lived in the name of Christ.

Now why did Jesus tell the Altar Guild he would appear to the disciples in Galilee? We are never told the answer, but one speculation is that the person telling this story back in 85 AD as part of Matthew's Gospel knew Jerusalem had already been leveled to the ground in 70 AD, 15 years before this Gospel is being written, and that really the church only survived in that first century by 'moving

on’, by not staying in the Jewish Holy City, because that City of Jerusalem in 26 AD was destined to be destroyed 44 years later in around 70 AD. And if the church and the first Christians had gotten firmly ensconced in Jerusalem as their ‘home base’, the church would have gone under just as did the Sadducees and their sacred Temple in Jerusalem. The Church, Christians, survived because they were willing to be mobile, willing to take the Good News of the Resurrected Christ ‘on the road’ to the rest of the world, and not to be anchored down by a

specific Temple or synagogue or church or location anywhere on earth.

Galilee, to which Jesus was asking the disciples to go to meet him, was also known as Galilee of the Gentiles; Jesus was pointing all disciples towards the rest of the world beyond the pure Jewish territory, beyond the Temple hierarchy, beyond the landed roots of the people of Israel. As Abraham had been called to go to the Promised Land of Israel from his home in Ur in what is modern day Iraq, now the Lord is calling the Chosen People of the Resurrection to go out

from the original Old Testament Promised Land of Israel as a geographic central landmark, and instead they were to take the wonderful news of the Resurrection to the whole world, to the Galilee of the Gentiles. The “New” Promised Land would not be a geographical location on Planet Earth or in our Solar System, or anywhere else in our universe; but the Promised Land of the new Israel was now the Promised Land of Heaven--the Promised Land not on earth, but in Heaven. As we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come,

thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” We are being called to heaven, but on the way there to our final destination in heaven we are to work diligently to follow God’s will and God’s ways on earth as they are followed in heaven. We here are to be the ones who help others visualize and realize their potential as eternal beings with God by how we love each other and all humanity, as we are the followers of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lutheran pastor the Rev. Mary Hinkle Shore writes, ‘When Jesus says [to the

two women, the proto-Altar Guild], "Do not be afraid," [Jesus] makes it clear that what could have happened did not [happen]. The earthquake and the resurrection are both signs that the end is at hand. But what kind of end? Until the women see Jesus, they do not know precisely what kind of end it will be. What about those who deserted Jesus, and the one who denied him, and those who were powerless to do anything but look on as the grisly scene of crucifixion unfolded? What about them? In the end, will they find that his blood is a

judgment against them? Will we? But, “do not be afraid,” Jesus says. “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” As the first Christians came to recognize the risen Christ, they experienced boldness and freedom of speech that surprises those of us who read their stories. It is as if their security came from the inside out. They were [suddenly no longer] afraid of people who scoffed at their claims. They were [never again] afraid of authorities who ordered them to stop speaking of Jesus. They were free from what the neighbors

thought about them and free from what the established power structure could do to them.’

http://day1.org/1087-the_insecure_tomb

In March 1993 four medical doctors from Knoxville, Tennessee, set off for a weekend of hunting in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina. A sudden, huge unexpected snowstorm blanketed the East Coast of the United States, lasting for days and trapping the four doctors in their large SUV. They

had been confident that the big vehicle would be able to get them around every obstacle, but the snow accumulated to nearly its top. And it finally they could not budge it. This was before cell phones had become popular. No one knew where they were. They had brought food for only two days, thinking this would be just a short fun excursion. They finally got down to the last donut, a stale one, which they divided among themselves for a last supper. They were cold, hungry, and greatly discouraged, wondering if anyone would ever find

them before they froze to death or starved. Suddenly they heard a sound of a helicopter overhead. They struggled out of their SUV, screaming and waving their hands for the pilot to locate them. And he did. The helicopter got close enough that they could see it was already completely filled with other hunters or hikers. Then the pilot began to lower a basket down to them. In the basket was a note that contained one single word: “Tomorrow.” Immediately the four doctors made a chorus line in the snow, kicking their legs as high as the snow

would allow. And they began to sing at the top of their lungs from the Broadway show, “Little Orphan Annie,”

“Tomorrow, tomorrow, I love you, tomorrow, you’re only a day away.”

Their fear had melted. Help was imminent. They would live to see another day.

And that is the message of Easter for each of us. Because of what Christ has done, we do not have to worry about today or tomorrow. Jesus Christ has conquered sin and death. And our resurrection lives have already begun if

we put our trust in him as our Lord and our Savior. We can begin living our resurrection lives this very moment.

God loves us. Our lives do matter. We will always have...Tomorrow.

“Defining” moments are what some folks might call them. As we gather on this Easter Sunday eve we celebrate the single most important defining moment of our Christian faith -- the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without this defining moment, none of the other

defining moments of our lives would
ever make sense.

[http://www.lectionarysermons.com/marc
h=31_02.htm](http://www.lectionarysermons.com/marc
h=31_02.htm)

Alleluia, Christ is risen. The Lord is
risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.

Description:

The resurrection explains why Christians firmly believe that our future is guaranteed to be with our Lord in heaven no matter what happens to us here on Planet Earth or what happens to us anywhere else as far as planetary exploration is concerned.

Tags:

Resurrection, Easter, criminal, Altar,
Guild, Vestry, defining, moment, Mary,
Jerusalem, Galilee, disciples, Little
Orphan Annie, tomorrow, doctors,
Knoxville, Tennessee, dance,
earthquake, Jerusalem, Galilee, Israel