

The Sunday Missive – April 11, 2021



The Second Sunday in Easter

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Mary Sue Gee, Thelma Huchthausen, Jeff Wheelwright and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, April 11. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or sssymington@gmail.com. After more than a year, we are able to return to safely worshipping together at our beautiful church on Shasta Avenue in Morro Bay. Next week, April 18 will be our last streamed Missive. From now on, please join us on Sundays at 12 Noon. **Let us pray:**

Truth-telling, wind-blowing, life-giving spirit, we present ourselves now for our instruction and guidance; breathe your truth among us, breathe your truth of deep Friday loss, your truth of awesome Sunday joy. Breathe your story of death and life, that our story may be submitted to your will for life. We pray in the name of Jesus crucified, and him risen to new life. **Amen.**

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 492 – Sing Ye Faithful, Sing with Gladness Vss. 1, 2 & 4

Sing, ye faithful, sing with gladness, wake your noblest, sweetest strain,
With the praises of your Savior let his house resound again;
Him let all your music honor, and your songs exalt his reign.

Sing how he came forth from heaven, bowed himself to Bethlehem's cave,
Stooped to wear the servant's vesture, bore the pain, the cross, the grave,
Passed within the gates of darkness, thence his banished ones to save.

Now on high, yet ever with us, from his Father's throne the Son
Rules and guides the world he ransomed, till the appointed work be done,
Till he see, renewed and perfect, all things gathered into one.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DG_ugr7yUI

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles – Chapter 4

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand.

The next day the rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem. They made the prisoners stand in their midst and demanded, "By what power or by what name did you heal this man?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, let it be known to all the people of Israel that this man is standing before you in good health by

the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.'" Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus. And when they saw the man who had been cured standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

They said, "What will we do with them? For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem what a notable sign has been done through them; we cannot deny it. But to keep it from spreading further among the people, they ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." After threatening them again, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because all the people were praising God for what had happened.

After they were released, John and Peter went to their friends and reported what the authorities had said to them. They raised their voices together to God and prayed, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, it is you who spoke through our ancestor David saying: 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? Why did the kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers gather against the Lord and his Messiah.' Now in this city, it has come to pass: both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel gathered against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. And now, Lord, despite their threats, grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalms 133-135

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!* It is like precious oil poured on the head

Running down on Aaron's beard* Running down on the collar of his robe.

It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion* For there the Lord bestows blessings, even life forevermore.

Praise the LORD, all you servants of the Lord* Who minister by night in the house of the Lord.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord* May the Lord bless you from Zion, God who made both heaven and earth.

Your name, O Lord endures forever* Your renown through all generations.

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by human hands* They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see.

Those who make them will be like them* And so will all who trust in them.

But as for you, Israel, praise the Lord* Praise be to the Lord, to the One who dwells in Jerusalem.

A Reading from the First Letter of John, beginning with Chapter One

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

The message we have heard from him and proclaim to you is this: that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

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

Whoever says, "I have come to know God," but does not obey God's commandments is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. This is the Word of the Lord.

Hymn 660 O Master Let Me Walk with Thee Vss. 1, 3 & 4

O Master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free;
Tell me thy secret; help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Teach me thy patience; still with thee in closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong,

In hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way,
In peace that only thou canst give, with thee, O Master, let me live.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUkaK6ceJmY>

A Reading from the Gospel According to John, Chapter 20

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the authorities, Jesus appeared and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." He showed them his hands and his side, and the disciples rejoiced when they saw him. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus again came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to know that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

From a talk by Martin Luther King, Jr.: “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time.... We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: “Too late.” There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. ...We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action.... Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter—but beautiful—struggle for a new world.” Such language – not scripture, but it sounds holy -- and such good news; we have a purpose!

Dr King’s talk, at The Riverside Church was entitled “Beyond Viet Nam.” It was the climax of a public rally against the war, that took place on April the Fourth, 1967 and it became one of his most admired speeches. The choice, says King is between “nonviolent coexistence,” the rule of law in peace and civility, and the sharing of resources and the alternative: “violent co-annihilation,” a condition reported and recorded in our newspapers every single day.

The true rule of law is not of course based on whatever it takes to control a diverse population but on our most forthright efforts to be just. As a great man said, “Good government is conservative with money and liberal with people.” For example, as we are now all too slowly coming to admit, our criminal justice system is good neither with money nor with people. Nor is it much good at reducing crime. Thus it is not a true rule of law. It is the result of poor – tragic -- choices.

Rule of law and sharing of resources: nonviolent coexistence, versus “violent co-annihilation,” not only in our own wildly overarmed and security-crazed society, but through the horrors of violent crime, terrorism, oppression, occupation, mass murder and war.

As King points out, we have a choice. Sometimes it’s hard to believe we do. But our human existence hinges most radically on this one reality: we have a choice. ‘God so loved the world that God gave her children the power of choice, that whosoever tries their best to make good ones will not perish – though they die.’ “We must move past indecision into action,” King says, actions, as in those things that speak louder and originate deeper than words. Yes sometimes our decision to choose well is the only action we can

take in the face of overpowering violence and/or abusive economic power. And sadly, sometimes we even have to be violent in order to halt violence done by others. There is no need for nor point to martyrdom in a just society.

But God's most holy gift to us in Jesus the Christ, as John says in his letter, that which "was from the beginning, we have heard, have seen with our eyes, and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life, was revealed to us so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have received and proclaim: that God is light; in God there is no darkness at all, and whoever obeys God's word, truly in this person love has reached perfection.

How can such great things happen in the likes of us, just by way of our coming to choose ways of peace? Thomas Merton waxes mystical: "A door opens in the center of our being and we seem to fall through it into immense depths which, although they are infinite, are all accessible to us. God touches us with a touch that is emptiness and empties us. God moves us with a simplicity that simplifies us."

The simplicity is evident in the acts of love and life that people instinctively perform when they have given themselves up to lives of faith. Not long ago, a friend from high school, died from raging cancers after years of diagnoses, treatments, remissions and hoping. Her passing is tragic and terribly sad for her loved ones and everybody who knew her. But the choices she and her family made over the past few years: to spend festive times together, to raise money and awareness in cancer walks and networking, to nourish and cherish brave hope and rigorous healing strategies, to love each other as selflessly as they could in the face of agonizing uncertainty, these faithful choices made of their family a community of love that inspired everybody who knows them to value life and love more highly.

The process of choosing can be, must be at once mystical and practical, uncertain and yet concrete, humbling and joyous: "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Here Richard Tarnas, describes our choices: "I believe our task is to develop a moral and aesthetic imagination deep enough and wide enough to encompass the contradictions of our time and history: the tremendous loss and tragedy as well as greatness and nobility, an imagination capable of recognizing that where there is light there is shadow, that out of hubris and fall can come moral regeneration, out of suffering and death, resurrection and rebirth." Imagine that. Choose it.

Prayers

Gracious Creator, giver of life and health: Comfort and relieve all who are ill, recovering from surgery, in mourning or otherwise suffering this day, especially Bob, Latifah, and those we name now, silently in our hearts or fervently with our voices. Give your power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that all for whom our prayers are offered may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in your loving care. I ask your prayers especially for the family and friends of Jay Davidson. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, by the mercy of God rest in peace. *Amen.*

Source of all goodness and life, through this day, we have named you in gladness, we have pondered the world you call good, we have relished your gifts and your tasks, and we have marveled in amazement, yet one more time, at the wonder of this Easter Jesus, who has died and is alive among us. Now we are homeward; and when we arrive there, it will be as it was this morning, with anxiety and demand, maybe conflict and even inconvenience.

Except that all things will be – yet again – made new. Make them new by your spirit; make new the church where we live; make new the public reality of justice among us; make new the practice of compassion in our neighborhood; make new every surge of peace in our violent world; make new the policies of our government and the workings of the church. Make all new, and we will be in Easter joy: unafraid and unwearied, your glad people, carrying among us the marks of the death and of the new life of Jesus in whose name we pray. *Amen.*

Hymn 495 – Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus! Vss. 1, 3 & 4

Hail, thou once despised Jesus! Hail, thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us; thou didst free salvation bring.
Hail, thou universal Savior, bearer of our sin and shame!
By thy merit we find favor: life is given through thy Name.

Jesus, hail! enthroned in glory, there forever to abide;
All the heavenly hosts adore thee, seated at thy Father's side.
There for sinners thou art pleading: there thou dost our place prepare;
Ever for us interceding, till in glory we appear.

Worship, honor, power, and blessing thou art worthy to receive;
Highest praises, without ceasing, right it is for us to give.
Help, ye bright angelic spirits, all your noblest anthems raise;
Help to sing our Savior's merits, help to chant Emmanuel's praise!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t46Qmnp_N4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RL4XLBMA6s>

Now may the promises of God working in you light up your eyes. May the love of God revealed to you in Christ Jesus shape your living. May the truth in God's word guide your every journey and may the joy and hope of God's kingdom fill your hearts this Easter Day. And thus the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you forever. ***Amen.***