

The Sunday Missive -- April 18, 2021



Saint Pierre et Saint Jean guérissant le boiteux - Nicolas Poussin 1655 - Metropolitan Museum

The Third Sunday in Easter

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Jan Swanson, Nancy Castle, Diane and Roger Ludin, Thelma Huchthausen, 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 18. 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, so this will be our last streamed Missive. It has been a delightful and gratifying labor of love. From now on, please join us on Sundays at 12 Noon. **Let us pray:**

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.**

Merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn 493 -- O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

O for a thousand tongues to sing my dear Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!

Jesus! the Name that charms our fears and bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.

Glory to God and praise and love be now and ever given
By saints below and saints above, the church in earth and heaven.

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles -- Chapter 3

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 4

When I call, answer me, O God of justice* From anguish you released me, have mercy and hear me!

O men, how long will your hearts be closed* Will you love what is futile and seek what is false?

It is the Lord who grants favors to those whom he loves* The Lord hears me whenever I call him.

Fear him; do not sin: ponder on your bed and be still* Make justice your sacrifice, and trust in the Lord.

"What can bring us happiness?" many say* Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.

O Lord, you have given me greater joy* Than they have from abundance of corn and new wine.

I lie down in peace and sleep comes at once* For you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Praise to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit* Both now and forever.

The God who was and is and is to come* At the end of the ages, hallelujah!

A Reading from the First Letter of John -- Chapter 3

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. This is the Word of the Lord

LEVAS Hymn 203 -- There is a Balm in Gilead

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,
But then the holy spirit revives my soul again.

If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus, and say He died for all.

Don't ever be discouraged for Jesus is your friend,
And if you lack for knowledge, he'll ne'er refuse to lend.

The Holy Gospel According to Luke -- Chapter 24

While they were talking, Jesus himself stood among them 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. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Today's Earth Day sermon is thanks to The Very Rev. Samuel Lloyd and the late Professor Sallie McFague.

There is nothing quite like spring here on the Central Coast. We know the stunning green on these hills will fade to brown soon enough, but it is impossible not to be surprised at their beauty. Here, by poet e.e. cummings:

I thank thee God for most this amazing day / for the leaping greenly spirits
of trees / and a blue true dream of sky / and for everything / which is
natural which is infinite / which is yes

This is Earth Day Sunday, a day for giving thanks for the beauty and abundance of the earth, and for reflecting on our call to care for her. In our lifetimes the theme has developed a far more intense cruciality. Our prayers of celebration and gratitude are now necessarily accompanied by loud and clear reminders that the condition of our earth is in many ways dire.

The argument about climate change is over. The earth is warming at an alarming rate, and all but a very few are convinced that the polluting of our planet will only get worse as new economies such as in China and India strive to achieve the standard of living we have in the U.S. We are already seeing ominous consequences—melting ice caps, glaciers shrinking at an increasingly fast rate, intensifying storms and droughts, rising coastal waters. New reports trickle out in the news almost every day of water supplies, animal species, and habitats at risk. But still, it is still, to far too great an extent, business as usual in this country and around the world.

It seems that there are two great issues the human race must face if it is ultimately to survive and thrive. Firstly, can we learn to deal with our differences without turning to violence and war? And the second is like unto it: can we muster the cooperative vision to reverse the ongoing destruction of the earth before it is too late? Christianity has often made the mistake of narrowing its focus solely to personal salvation. 'My faith is about me and my own well-being and private spiritual life, and above all about my going to heaven.' But our scriptures tell us that God creates and loves the whole world of oceans and rocks, plants and animals alike, and human beings are created to be part of that great harmony and stewards of its welfare. It's God's world, God's house, after all, not ours. And we humans have been the most rude and self-centered of guests.

The greatest spiritual leaders from St. Francis to Mahatma Gandhi to the Dalai Lama to Desmond Tutu have insisted that God's universal love knows no bounds of race or faith or nation, or even of species. All of life is seamlessly connected. Scientists now tell us it is actually possible that the flap of a butterfly wing in Japan can set off a hurricane in the Caribbean.

And the driving of a gas guzzler in California can help melt an ice shelf in Greenland.

In Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the spiritual teacher Father Zosima puts our interconnectedness this way: "All is like an ocean, all flows and connects; touch it in one place and it echoes at the other end of the world... Love all of God's creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love animals, love plants, love each thing. If you love each thing you will perceive the mystery of God in all things."

That vision is what moved St. Francis to write his great poem celebrating 'brother sun and sister moon.' We're all made of the same stardust, which makes us cousins to granite boulders, polar bears in the Arctic, and grand sequoias on the upper slopes of the Sierra Nevada.

We who love this earth have to ask, 'How then shall we live? How can the human race pull back from the brink we are racing toward?' Ultimately the answers will have to be technological—collaborating to develop and produce sustainable ways of generating the energy and goods our world increasingly demands. And if we can't do it sustainably, learn to do without.

We can begin to see our health and our destiny in relationship to all that exists. Clean water and air are spiritual issues. "God so loved the *world*," Jesus said. We have to learn to do the same.

We need church to help us to see through the phony consumerism and individualism that leave us more anxious, lonely and falsely bereft. And we need to stay connected to nature—through walks and bike rides, through watching the birds carry out their daily dance, through strolling along beaches and hiking in mountains, or just lingering in the park down the street.

And we have to evaluate the lives we are living—the cars we drive, the trips we take, the size of our homes, the light bulbs we burn, the ways we get to and from work, the amount of meat we consume. Some churches are beginning to have two pledge campaigns during the year—one where people pledge their financial resources for the church's ministries, and the second is a pledge of what they intend to do in the coming year to be less of a burden on the earth.

The stakes couldn't be higher for the human race, and in fact for the entire planet. Either we will learn new ways beyond a self-centered individualism

or millions will suffer and our children and their children will inherit a critically ill world.

Some will demand to know: “What is the point of the U.S. making a lot of sacrifices for the environment when countries like China and India are only going to make things much worse as they develop?” But, as with any problem in any community, if the most prosperous nation in the world, won’t lead the way, who will? And if professed followers of Jesus won’t help lead the way to responsibility, who will? Will we be able to say, with Peter: “Look at us...what we have we give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and be healed, O Earth. God isn’t going to ask us whether China or India did their part, but if we did ours.

That really is the spiritual question for each us: Will we take serious, uncomfortable, radical steps in the right direction—for God’s sake, for the sake of human lives already at risk, for our children’s sake, and for the sake of the earth itself and our fellow creatures...or not?

Prayers

O God of all names and beyond all names, we pray in great gratitude this holy day for Love. Your love that raises the sun and greets me in each drop of water I drink, in each crumb of bread I taste, in each smile and tear I produce, in each child I meet.

In a mantle of awe I stand enwrapped. My feet rest upon Earth and my head meets the moon. O Holy One, our times are fraught with challenge.

Our Earth suffers climatic chaos, women, men and children suffer wounds of conflict, pandemic, drought, flood and crumbling economic systems.

All manner of suffering and questions press upon us. Our small beating hearts do not seem large enough -- yet daily they keep expanding into ever more capacity for Compassion.

Each morning, hope beckons us towards the horizon. Each noontime grace feeds us with Love. Each evening an invisible breath enfolds us in a shawl of mercy. O holy one who is Hope, Grace and Breath, transform our sadness and doubt into songs for life.

We pray for our beloved planet and all creatures, our sisters and brothers in life. May healing waters fill the rivers and oceans. May small, deliberate actions grow seeds of justice and conservation. May one prophetic note of the smallest birdsong courageously sung on a busy street at dawn inspire

leaders to free their voices to speak for the Common Good and future generations. O God of all names and beyond all names, whose face is love, may each of us and all of us be the face of transforming love in this moment, in this day, in these times. ***Amen***

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 Latifah, and all others 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. ***Amen.***

Accept O Lord the fervent prayers of thy people. In the multitude of thy mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious o lover of souls, and to you we give thanks: Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. ***Amen.***

Hymn 180 -- He is Risen

He is risen, he is risen! Tell it out with joyful voice:
He has burst his three days' prison; let the whole wide earth rejoice:
Death is conquered, we are free, Christ has won the victory.

Come, ye sad and fearful-hearted, with glad smile and radiant brow!
Death's long shadows have departed; Jesus' woes are over now,
And the passion that he bore, sin and pain can vex no more.

He is risen, he is risen! He hath opened heaven's gate:
We are free from sin's dark prison, risen to a holier state;
And a brighter Easter beam on our longing eyes shall stream.

And though we shall pass from this scene and from this stage called life,
Yet the Earth will always be and her children the wind, the sky, the land, the
sea shall ever sing songs of praise to the Creator.

And now, may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
inspire you this day and remain with you forever. ***Amen.***