

“Alleluia”
Sermon for Easter Sunday
April 4, 2010 – The Rev. Torrence Harman

Good Morning! Welcome, Happy Morning! This begins our joyful celebration every Easter.

We arrive on Easter morning, whether it is a sunny or a cloudy day, refreshed, renewed. We have smiles on our faces, a bit of spring in our step, a sense that life is picking up again. For many, Easter Sunday really marks the beginning of spring. Our spiritual life and nature seem to move in sync.

We step into springtime this Easter morning. The world seems re-energized and vital once again. New life has burst through the dark soil. Buds bloom. Flowers give color and vibrant scent to all that is around us. We wake on Easter morning to an exciting new world – knowing, really knowing, that life will be different – richer, warmer, more abundant – now that winter is past.

And we bring out the Alleluia’s again. Even during a wintery Lent it has been hard to suppress them, hasn’t it? Let’s hear it for the Alleluia’s.

Easter morning is an Alleluia kind of day – the biggest and the best Alleluia kind of day in the whole year. And don’t we current day disciples feel amazingly blessed!

But, that is not how the first Easter morning started out. Not for those first disciples. Some woke up early, while it was still dark. Some slept through the dawn of that first Easter day. Some left home early, drawn to a tomb. Some stayed in, kept their doors locked, scared to death, entombed themselves. Death stalked their hearts wherever they were. The crowds shouting Hosanna and waving palms in front of a new “King” on the Sunday one week earlier had turned ugly by Friday. Shouts of celebration had turned to threat, “Crucify him, crucify him.” And those who agreed, those who had set such plans in motion much earlier, made that happen.

That first Easter morning was a one of deep sorrow, devastating fear, paralyzing anxiety, agonizing grief and, perhaps for some, even anger. Friday’s trauma clung to that morning like the damp, dank, smell of a tomb embracing its dead. There was no joy in any of their hearts or minds that first Easter morning. And there was nothing to suggest that the day would turn out differently.

Their leader’s death on Friday had killed the hopes and dreams of the disciples. Whatever visions of coming power and glory that danced in the heads of the disciples on Palm Sunday or even before – in the midst of miracles, brilliant story-telling and words of great wisdom – died with the death of their leader. His last words on the cross, “It is finished!” said it all the disciples figured. The dream faded, the vision vanished and darkness took over.

But that day did turn out differently. The days to come turned into days of hope and renewed vision, when a once dead Jesus began to appear as the risen Christ. And as the reality sunk in – that nothing, not even death, could separate them from the love and the presence of their life giving Lord.

It didn't happen the same way for each of them – this sensing, this knowing, this experiencing their Lord's presence. They began to find out that their personal relationship with their human Lord had not ended, it had simply changed. It was now to show itself as a personal and unique relationship with their Lord, a Divine Savior, who wanted to be really real to them in a new but even more powerful and life giving way.

And here's how it happened. Some were women; some were men. Some were young; some were older. To one, he was unrecognizable until she heard him call her name. To two others, he was simply someone walking with them on the road to Emmaus - someone they recognized only in hindsight remembering how he had broken bread with them. To some a sudden appearance startled them into seeing/knowing him. To others it took a while. To one it took some working through a time of disbelief. To a group of fishing buddies, it took coming closer to a barely visible figure on the beach stoking a breakfast fire, waiting for them. To some it took something "other worldly" like an angel or two dazzling about, to catch their attention. To one later come to discipleship it took a bright light that brought him to his knees on a dusty road on the way to Damascus and a killing. To some it felt like an earthquake had occurred. To another it happened in a quiet garden.

The stories of various disciples who lived throughout the centuries – how they experienced Christ, how they came to him, how they found or were found by him, vary – each to their own story. But however it happened, different or similar, they came to know his presence as life giving – as very real in their lives.

This is the gift of the Easter story. That nothing can separate us from the One who wants us to see the light that can lead us through any darkness, any death into new life. That the One who died for us to give us a new chance of even closer relationship with him and the rest of creation, is alive and present to us always. That our seeing with our hearts and experiencing in our lives the life giving love of this One Lord, this Christ, is unique and personal to each of us. It can then deepen and broaden – life giving, life expanding in community – as we gather together and share it with one another.

It is Easter morning. Open the gift. Christ lives. He lives so you can. He wants you, loves you. Yes, you. He is waiting to let you find him, know him, see him for yourself. Isn't that the most wonderful news you've heard in a long time? Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen!