

Yr. C, Easter Sunday
April 21, 2019
Preached by the Rev. Furman Buchanan
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
987 Words

Lessons: Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1st Corinthians 15:19-26
John 20:1-18

Early on Sunday morning, before sunrise, Mary Magdalene did the best thing she knew to do. When the weight of her world seemed too much to bear, she began *her week* simply doing the next, right thing. She went to Jesus' tomb with spices and showed her respect and devotion to God. She went to the tomb of Jesus with courage, generosity, and love.

Late on Monday afternoon, before sunset, Jean-Marc Fournier did the best thing *he knew* to do. When the weight of his challenge seemed too much to bear, the chaplain of the Paris Fire Brigade began his week simply doing the next, right thing. He ran through the burning Cathedral of Our Lady and showed his respect and devotion to God. He went into an apocalyptic blaze with courage, generosity, and love.

Early this morning in southern Louisiana Gerald Toussaint is doing the best thing he knows to do. When the weight of white hatred toward blacks seems too much to bear, he—and the pastors of *two other* burned out churches—are beginning *their week* simply doing the next, right thing. Even *without* their arson-torched church buildings, they are pressing on to show their undaunted respect and devotion to God. They are showing up to confront cowardice and hatred with courage and love.

Morning, afternoon, and night—in places all around the world there are people just trying to do the best thing they know to do.

Right here in our own suburban, middle class American congregation many of us feel the *full weight* of illness, pain, grief, anxiety, depression, or fear that seems too much to bear. We're all here on Easter morning...simply doing the next, right thing. We have shown up here out of respect and devotion to God. Here we are holding up one another, our beloved, and the world with our prayers...which we offer to God with courage, generosity, and love.

The first thing to know about Easter...is that it shows us how utterly *unnecessary* we are for the transforming, resurrection life of a loving God to unfold. Remember, the tomb was empty *before* Mary Magdalene or John or Peter arrived to do the next, right thing.

But the *second thing* I want you to remember about Easter is that it shows us how utterly *blessed we are* to witness the transforming, resurrection life of a loving God. We are *not blessed* in spite of our tears. Like Mary Magdalene, we are blessed *through* our tears. We are *not blessed* in spite of our fears. Like Jean Marc, we are blessed through the *facing* of our fears. We are *not blessed* in spite of our enemies. Like Gerald Toussaint, we are blessed *through* our courageous and loving resistance against our enemies.

You see, the Good news of Easter is that God has already begun the miraculous, transforming resurrection miracle *without us*.

But the *great news of Easter* is that we get to witness and participate in God's miracle by showing up to do the best thing we know to do. For Mary, the *next* best thing was to rise up from her grief and bring spices to Jesus' tomb. She probably didn't think she had the strength to do it, but the transforming love of God was already at work!

For Jean Marc, the *next* best thing was to climb up on top of altars to snatch and salvage historic symbols of our faith. He probably didn't think he had the courage to do it, but the transforming love of God was already at work!

For Gerald Toussaint, the next best thing is to preach peace “to those who are far off and to those who are near.” He may not feel like he can do it, but the transforming love of God is already at work!

As for you and me, the next best thing is simply the *next*, courageous, generous, or loving thing that we're not so sure we can do. So, listen carefully to the good news of Easter: The transforming love of God is *already at work!*

You know, it is not all that hard to do the right thing when life is easy and comfortable. It is so much harder when the weight seems too much to bear. And yet, the story of Easter...is that the very best *miracle of God* happened...*right after* the weightiest and worst evil imaginable—the *murder* of God.

My favorite prayer for guidance begins like this: “Go before us, O Lord, with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help...” The truth of Good Friday is that God has *gone before us* through suffering. The truth of Holy Saturday is that God has gone before us through *death*.

The promise of Easter is that God *is still going before us* through the resurrection into new and transformed life. This is why, even today, we are still being invited to witness and participate in God's best miracle, *especially* when the weight seems too much to bear. We're still invited to show up and meet our *living God* with courage, generosity, and love.

Dear people, the Good News of Easter is that Christ is alive! The Good News of Easter is that Christ's Body—the *Church*—is alive! The Good News of Easter is that *this congregation* is alive! The Good News of Easter is that you and I—by the grace of God's transforming, resurrection miracle—we are alive—*by him and with him and in him!* The Good News is that God has done *all of this* without our help.

And yet, the *great news* of Easter is that we are blessed to witness and participate. So, for goodness' sake, think like that is true. Speak like that is true. Act like that is true...*because it is!*

And we proclaim this truth when we say, “Alleluia! Christ is risen!”
The Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

Amen.