

## **Easter Sunday. April 12, 2020. Pandemic.**

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia, and our opening hymn calls it our triumphant, holy day. And it is a triumphant, holy day, the day we usually have our biggest party of the year. The choir sings the roof off the building, the altar guild has everything gleaming, the people are packed in with their Easter bonnets, and the sermon is usually short and more of an anthem than a discourse.

But this year feels different, very different. And of course it is different in all the externals and even some of the things we would have thought were essential. I saw an advertisement this week claiming that it's just not Easter without a particular brand of ham. And man, that's uh, not going to be an acceptable bar of legitimacy for me. It is Easter, Christ is risen, we are being made alive again--and yes, we wish that it were different. We wish that we were together with the triumphant choir and the Easter bonnets and the gleaming vessels and the correct brand of ham. This year both are true--even when we know that resurrection is deeper stronger truer.

I think it's the year to remember something our Priest Associate, Bob Wyatt, taught me a couple years ago: that the first Easter happened in silence and even maybe isolation. By the time the women arrive at the tomb, the main action has already happened. And the immediate response from Jesus' friends is not a raucous party but bewilderment, disbelief, grief, and fear.

We have become close colleagues with these responses over the last few weeks, plus frustration and anger and longing for what used to be the simplest things. For us, of course, it is not Easter itself that has caused these responses, but these Lenten feelings have not been banished as usual by the sunset last night.

That sucks. But it does not mean that it isn't Easter. It does not mean that Christ is not arisen, and us with him. For different reasons, this morning we are closer companions to the first Easter Christians than usual.

There, in the room where they had locked themselves away and outside the tomb where the courageous women had come, grief bewilderment and fear were part of the first Easter. And even still Christ broke down the gates of death and brought new life to his friends and the world. Here, in the rooms where we are locked away, grief bewilderment and fear are part of our Easter today. And even still Christ has broken down the gates of death and is bringing new life to us and to the world--even if in ways that we don't always notice.

This year especially it is no accident that Mary Magdalene mistook the risen Christ for a gardener. We now know that she was more right than anyone realized. Because now, today, here, the risen Jesus is saving the bruised and battered world. But not with a flash of brilliant light and thunderclaps of miraculous whatever. Rather, he is saving the world and us with the patient love of a gardener, who tends and waters and loves and waits. It is not the salvation or Easter we want. But it is our salvation, slow and strong and deep and sweet. Christ is risen and so, against all odds, are we. Alleluia!