

Easter Sunday, April 12

John 1:1-18 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* (vv.1-5 NASB)

Although I was brought up attending church twice weekly, for Sunday worship and Wednesday night prayer meeting, plus Vacation Bible School, church camp, and revivals every summer, I did not truly know Jesus Christ until I was 33. Interesting—God’s grace led me to die to my sinful self at the same age as Jesus was, when he died for the sins of the whole world.

Deeply grateful for my salvation, I still did not 100% believe Jesus was God. Then, one clear night, as I looked out the window of my twenty-third-floor kitchen in New York City, admiring the stars, Christ spoke to me in words so clear I was stunned: “I was there when they were made.” Wow! I *ran* to my Bible to re-read John 1:1-5. In my own darkness, I had not “comprehended” the Light. From that moment on, I believed fully! On this Resurrection Sunday, may the Light of Christ shine forth from the dark tomb of every dead thing in *your* life. Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalms 148, 149, 150

Today please pray for:

Colleen Spangler; Tom Spitz; Curt & Annabeth Stephens, Darren; Joe & Jamie Steuer; Donna Stewart; Roger & Susan Stiefel; Claire Stocking; Johanne Stride.

Monday, April 13

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 ...*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and... He was buried, and... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* (vv.3b-4)

As much as we’d like to, we can’t stop at the Christmas manger, or at the foot of Calvary’s cross. Yes, it should be enough that God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, and that he willingly suffered an agonizing death for our sins. But why, from the earliest days of the Church, has the resurrection of Christ from the dead also been proclaimed and preached so passionately?

Paul answers definitively in 1 Corinthians 15:17 (NLT): “If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.” Jesus’ resurrection was the final phase of God’s plan of salvation, guaranteeing believers forgiveness of sins *and* eternal life.

But having been raised in a Protestant tradition which taught that one could never be certain of going to heaven, even if saved, I still had some niggling uncertainty about eternity. Then, I had a “chance” conversation in a train station with a lay evangelist who vigorously argued: If we are saved by faith it is because of Christ’s completed work—not anything we can or can’t do—that we will be with him in heaven. Through that stranger’s faith, the Holy Spirit took away my doubt, and now I feel sure of how much Jesus loves me and wants me with him forever. He feels the same about you!

Exodus 12:14-27; Psalms 93, 98; Mark 16:1-8

Today please pray for:

Vanida Taimany; Bob & Bonnie Teetsell; Michael Thomas; David & Mary Tilney; Marjorie Treadwell; Lisa Tuell; Dick & Myra Tutwiler; Jim & Marjorie Twohig.

Tuesday, April 14

Mark 16:9-20 *“These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues.”* (v.17)

Yowee! As a new believer when I read passages like this, I was terrified of encountering evil spirits and absolutely did *not* want to speak in tongues. Somehow, I was forgetting the word of God is true, and in His wisdom, the Holy Spirit

only gives us spiritual gifts (such as exorcism or prophecy) “for the edification of the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12 BLB).

One day not long after my conversion, in that same New York City kitchen, I knelt in earnest prayer for a friend in severe distress. But my feeble intercessions were utterly inadequate, so I cried out to God. Suddenly, I began praying very quietly in an unknown language. At the same time, a powerful sense of God’s presence and peace for my friend overwhelmed me. Much later, my priest explained “tongues” as “the only language [God’s] the devil doesn’t understand.” *That*, I could handle! God waited awhile to lead me into “deliverance ministry.” But experiencing Christ casting out demons through prayer, even in our century, did not scare me. It only deepened my faith in Jesus as God.

Exodus, 12:28-39; Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28

Today please pray for:

Richard & Lauralee Uihlein; Mike & Terri Vaughan; Carol & Stephen Viehe; Jackman & Jane Vodrey; Midge Voss.

Wednesday, April 15

Psalm 99 *Proclaim the greatness of the LORD our God and fall down before his footstool; he is the Holy One.* (v.5 BCP)

In thanksgiving for the new life God gave me through Jesus Christ, I love to worship the Lord with praise music—while driving to church, or when I’m working on a sermon at home. Scripture tells us God “inhabits the praises” of His people (Psalm 22:3 WEB). That means God’s presence is magnified among us when we engage in praise.

Because demons are cast out in Jesus’ name (Mark 9:38; Acts 16:18), we know the devil flees whenever Christ is named and glorified. In “Your Great Name,” Natalie Grants sings, “the enemy, he has to leave at the sound of Your Great Name.”

The enemy of our souls really hates Easter and the joyful praise we offer God during this season of rejoicing in Christ’s resurrection. But keep on praising, adoring, and worshiping the Lord in whatever way works for you—from Southern Gospel to Gregorian chant, or even with the hymnal in your pew. James 4:7 says: “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Praise and worship from the heart *is* spiritual warfare, and if I can handle it, you can too. After all, we’re on the winning side!

Exodus 12:40-51; Psalm 97; 1 Corinthians 15:29-41; Matthew 28:1-16

Today please pray for:

Polly Waldron; Lee & Lynn Walker, Lainey; Gwynn Wardwell; Clair & Joan Watkins; Barbara Watson; Carin Weaver; William & Karin Weber; Mike Werchek & Margaret Copeland; Jack & Tona Wert; Timothy & Elene West.

Thursday, April 16

Psalm 147 *Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God! How pleasant it is to honor him with praise!* (v.1 BCP)

As I'm writing this in the summer of 2019, I've just passed the tenth anniversary of my ordination as an Episcopal priest, while also marking 28 years as a pastor. Last Sunday, our parish observed the occasion in a special service with the Dean and President of an Episcopal seminary as our guest preacher, followed by a delicious lunch; custom-made cake; and a "congratulations" card lovingly signed by most of the congregation. After the service, I received hugs from parishioners who'd never before embraced me. One jumped up to fetch a fruit cup for me; another offered to re-fill my drink; one couple gave me a generous check. But all I could think of was Jesus' warning: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26 NASB)—because God alone gets the credit for every moment of my nearly 30 years in ministry.

Although I am more comfortable giving praise and honor to God (today's psalms are perfect for that), it did feel good to receive so much encouragement and support for my ministry. So, keep praising and honoring the Lord, then encourage someone today. Both will appreciate it!

Exodus 13:3-10; Psalm 146; 1 Corinthians 15:41-50; Matthew 28:16-20

Today please pray for:

Debbie Wikander & Edward O'Hara; Bill Wiley; Griselda (Peki) G. Wilson; Earl & Gloria Willis; Elizabeth Wood; Louisa Woodhull; Shirley Woolaway; Pat & Kay Woolley; Michael & Louise Yakubisin; Barbara Youngs; Peter & Mary Zimmermann; Jim & Margo Ziolo; Helen Zurlo, Jeffrey.

Friday, April 17

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.* (vv.51-52 NASB)

I can't read this verse without hearing in my head a rich baritone soloist singing this from the Easter portion of G. F. Händel's oratorio, "Messiah" (I had it playing on YouTube as I wrote this). Handel set this verse to powerful, soaring, joyful music that fits its miraculous message to every believer in Jesus Christ. The firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18), Jesus leads the way for us to eternal life with God in heaven.

I love the Episcopal funeral liturgy that is so filled with hope and joy. Often, in our Mass of Christian Burial, we speak the words of God's promise from Revelation 21:4: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." Yes, because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we *shall* be changed—for good! Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16; Psalm 136; Luke 24:1-12

Today please pray for our Bishop and staff:

Bishop Dabney Smith; Fr. Joe Maiocco; Jack Wert (Sr. Warden); Jim Etz (Jr. Warden); Glenn Saffran (Music Director); Ann Witmer (Parish Secretary); Randy Stewart (Financial Accountant); Bob Matthews (Treasurer); St. John's Family (God's Ministers).

Saturday, April 18

Psalm 145 *One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power.* (v.4 BCP)

Nobody is born a Christian. We become believers through being exposed to Word and Sacrament—the Scriptures and the Liturgy. While I may not have had a conversion experience until I was well into adulthood, I firmly believe I came to know Jesus at all because as a child I was taught about him.

In our culture, Christians are becoming a minority, and many Americans have never even heard of Jesus—or if they have, they either don't care who he is or they refuse to change their way of living to follow him. But we need to continue "praising God's works" and "declaring his power" to the next generation because Jesus promised nothing could ever defeat his Church. That is one reason our parish holds a yearly Vacation Bible School. Some people will believe and be saved, in response to what we teach them.

You don't have to be ordained clergy, a missionary, or even a Sunday School teacher to simply tell others in your own words who Jesus is and what he's done for you. Let God do the rest!

Exodus 13:1-17—14:4; 2 Corinthians 4:16—5:10; Mark 12:18-27

Today please pray for our various ministries: Archives; Acolytes; Altar Guild; Bible Studies; Card Ministries; Choirs; Coffee Hour Ministry; Columbarium Committee; Finance Ministry; Flower Ministry; Foyer Groups; Lay Ministries; Library; Men's Fellowship; Music Ministry; Office Volunteers; Order of St. Luke; Outreach; Parish Life Staff; Parish Prayer Group; Pastoral Care; Prayer Chain Ministry; Sisters for Life; Spirit Alive; St. Matthew's House Volunteers; Stitches of Love; Thrift Shoppe Volunteers; Youth & Children's Ministries; Ushers and Vestry.

by Nina George-Hacker

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