

Sermon RISEN

The Very Rev. David Marshall, All Angels Easter Sunday 4.20.25

A couple of weeks before Easter I received a word of wisdom from the Holy Spirit about today's message. It was one word – risen. I appreciate it when the Holy Spirit delivers a message to me early. I created a take home card for each person. On the front of the white card is a red amaryllis, green stock and dark brown bulb. You can see the whole plant. If you look closely, the word RISEN is found in the flower. Let me explain the meaning behind this card.

In the Anglican theological tradition, we believe God is revealed in three books – Scripture, and the metaphorical book of Nature and of Reason (or experience). It's how we experience God being revealed to us. In today's Gospel lesson, the angel told the women who gathered at the empty tomb (that once held Jesus's body – they knew that because they placed him there on Friday afternoon). The angel said, "He is not here, is he risen!" Risen is a theme in the Old Testament too. So, we know risen is found in the book of Scripture. But what about the Book of Nature? Living on a barrier island next to the Gulf, we see clouds forming high above our heads. We now know that water moisture rises from the Gulf and makes clouds. The water below has salt, pollutants and the like but what is risen is clean and pure water. That water is then accumulated and dropped onto the land. Likewise, the bulb of an amaryllis rises up as a stock and then a beautiful flower.

How about the Book of Reason? Where do we experience RISEN in our life. Have you experienced something that was dead and then rose to life? I have gotten to know some kids who were adopted. Some were adopted much later than others. They thought they were never going to have a family but then RISEN occurred and now they have families of their own. Have you ever had a broken relationship that was mended and then found new life? How about a hobby that you have taken up? These are experiences of risen in our life.

But let's go back to the bulb. The lesson of Jesus's body being placed in the tomb and then him being risen on Easter morning reminds me of the amaryllis bulb. The bulb is underground, unseen, and rather ugly. Yet, at the right time, it somehow knows to send roots downward and a shoot upward. It then creates a beautiful flower for others to see.

I took a botany class in college. The professor, who is a Benedictine monk and was Abbot of the monastery that facilitates the operation of the university, said that how a seed knows when to grown and in what direction to send the roots and shoots is a mystery. He said there are theories but no one really knows for sure. In fact, you can plant a garlic clove upside down in the ground and the roots will make a 180 turn and head down and the shoot will also make a turn and head straight up.

This is the story for us in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Risen means alive and growing and beautiful for others to see. God is rising new life in you. Just like he did for Jesus, and the clouds, and the amaryllis, God is taking what seemed underground and dead and is making it new life.