



A Message for Easter from the Right Reverend Thomas J. Brown, Bishop of Maine

April 17, 2022

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

A former teacher of preaching, Thomas Long, says that at every Christian funeral there are two preachers.

One preacher is death himself, who by the very presence of the casket and the funeral director and the hearse and the sadness in the air preaches a sermon we've heard before. "Once again I've won. You left the back door open and I snuck in again with the cancer or the car accident or the heart attack and I've claimed another victory." [Because this is 2022 we would add COVID-19 and deaths to gun violence to death's list] Professor Long goes on, taking the role of Death Preacher, "You thought you could get out alive, but you can't. In the end, I get everyone, and life is meaningless and love is powerless and it's all futile, like rolling a stone uphill only to have it come rolling back down again."

That's death's sermon.

The other preacher at the funeral is the priest or the deacon or the lay person who says, "Life is eternal, and love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, in fact love never ends. Neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. So where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?" That's faith's message.

And if those are the dueling preachers at the funeral, how much more are they the dueling preachers on this Day of Resurrection?



We have seen so much of the power of death on earth, and its sway over life. We arrive at Easter Day carrying heavy burdens of heartbreak and anger for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and fear for what that might mean for the rest of the world. We arrive at Easter Day weary from, and still concerned about, a pandemic that has changed everything. And, we arrive at Easter Day conscious of the scourge of gun violence in our nation—the attack on the subway in New York is the latest. Besides the communal sadness, each of us carry baggage for loss and grief in our personal and family lives.

In St. Luke's version of the resurrection he explicitly tells us that several women were there—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women—that they were the ones who kept telling everything they'd experienced at the empty tomb to the other apostles. They kept telling these things...

To keep telling things assumes that others keep listening. When we tell something, another person listens. A principal action for our faith community in 2022—a chief focus for us—is to “listen”—along with the actions to connect, adapt, and hope.

On Easter Day, and throughout these Great 50 Days of Easter, we'll have many opportunities to follow the lead of those women, who kept telling these things. To keep telling about the joy that comes from having a relationship with our Risen Lord, to keep telling ourselves and others that this joy is a spiritual gift which comes to us more readily when we open our heart and open our hands to receive it. And, we'll also have many opportunities to listen while others tell us this good news.

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are given a way to live, and for Him to live in us. And so we keep telling this good news, and we keep bending our ears so we can listen to this good news. Making us both tellers and listeners.



Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. This promise is neither too big nor too distant for us. In fact, it's here, right now. All we need do is keep telling these things, echoing the women, and listening to the joyous tidings from St. Paul, "Neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."