

Sunday of the Resurrection

Isa 25:6-9; Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18

Beyond Anxiety and Fear

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Two years ago, when singer-songwriter Mike Posner finished a six-month, 3,000 mile, walk across America, he noted that: “I have learned that there is a lot of beauty and light, on the other side of anxiety and fear.”¹ There is a lot of beauty and light, on the other side of anxiety and fear. This could easily be said of the experience that the disciples and followers of Jesus had during the trial and brutal execution of Jesus—a lot of “anxiety and fear.” But, when those anxiety and fear-filled women and disciples went to the tomb that Sunday morning they returned with an experience of incredible “beauty and light.”

Those witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ finally understood that something new had occurred, something wholly different, something so filled with “beauty and light” that it had changed the very world we live in. Suddenly, they saw the world as God had meant it to be, as God had created it to be, so filled with beauty and light that it eclipsed the eternal fear and anxiety of death. It had destroyed what the prophet Isaiah had called “*the shroud of death cast over all people.*”[Is 25:7]

In the Resurrection, the disciples had living, definitive proof of “Who” Jesus is as: “*God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.*” And therefore, what Jesus said is also eternally true. This proof of beauty and light was so overwhelming it later slammed that ardent persecutor of the Church, Paul, to the ground when he too encountered the resurrected Lord. But then, we should not be surprised. As Jesus had already said, “*I am the light of the world.*” [Jn 9:5b] and he had told his disciples that: “*I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.*” [Jn. 12:46] For in “darkness” there is only anxiety and fear. And as long as we live in anxiety and fear, we cannot see all of the great beauty and light in the life that God created.

The “beauty and light” of that Resurrection morning emboldened the disciples and empowered them “*to preach and to testify*”[Acts 10:42] even in the face of persecution and their own inevitable death. And, Why? Because, through their faith in Jesus Christ, those Christian disciples now lived in a world of “beauty and light” and that is a world with no room for anxiety and fear. In Christ Jesus, they now knew that beyond “anxiety and fear,” lay only “beauty and light.”

Well, we Christians today are the inheritors of that reality, inheritors of God’s vision. For now, **we** are God’s “children of light.” As Jesus said: “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.*” [Jn. 8:12] We are that living legacy. We are the “children of light.” Today we retell the story and remind ourselves of God’s mighty power and dominion. Today we celebrate that all Jesus had said is true, not even death could hold him. And, for all those who believe and follow him, we need not fear death; for death cannot hold us. For when we confront the emptiness of death, something happens. We find life. If we focus only on empty tombs and missing bodies, we can miss the implications of Jesus’ resurrection for us today. The fact is Easter is not just about the end of death’s dominion over all creation. It is about being liberated to experience a new way of life in solidarity with God.

¹ Mike Posner, CBS Interview televised March 29, 2021

Jesus went to the hard wood of the Cross saying, “Fear not. I am the light of the world and I love you, I love you, I love you.” And in that all encompassing love on the Cross, lies our salvation. The Resurrection speaks to us and says: “You are loved. You are loved. You are loved. So, please walk with me, for I will show you through my love that ‘there is a lot of beauty and light, on the other side of anxiety and fear.’”

I would like to close with a story about a little 8-year-old girl who was living in an orphanage. She was extremely shy and, sadly, she was also very unattractive. The other children would not play with her and so she was left all alone. She was a constant problem to her teachers. And the management of the institution soon sought to get rid of her. She had already been transferred twice. In this particular orphanage, there was an ironclad rule that all “outside” communication had to be censured by the director or the associate.

Late one afternoon this little girl climbed a tree whose branches overhung the main wall of the orphanage. She placed an envelope on a limb as far out as she could reach. What she did not know is that she had been watched by the director. When the girl had returned to her room, the director (in a most undignified fashion) climbed the tree and retrieved the mysterious message. After she had read it without a word, she passed it on to her associate. The letter read: “From Susan, to anybody who reads this, I love you.”.... “to anybody who reads this, I love you.”²

Long ago on a tree, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, a man died. His word to all the world from that Cross was this: “For any who pass this way, I love you, I love you. I love you.” God loves you and me more than we have ever recognized, more than we can ever know. He came to bring light to the world and to show us, particularly on this Resurrection Sunday, that despite wars, famine, poverty, disease, or even a COVID-19 pandemic, “there is so much beauty and light, on the other side of anxiety and fear, for you are loved, you are loved, you are loved.” Alleluia, The Lord is Risen!

*“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his mercy endures forever.
On this day the LORD has acted; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” Ps 118:1,24*

The only Meditation for Today is simply to reflect upon the beauty and light in the world through the eyes of the resurrected Christ and to know that you are loved; you are loved; you are loved.

² Bennett Cerf, Humorist, Author, & Publisher. Attributed to Bennett Cerf, found without formal citation.