

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Easter
March 31, 2024
rmcneely+

Alleluia. The Lord is Risen.

Jesus walked this Earth some 1500 weeks.
But as those of you who walked with him here at St Thomas'
Know,
it was this last week,
What we have come to call, "Holy Week"
That was the most significant week
in the history of the world.
And maybe the most significant week of our entire lives.

We were part of the multitude that welcomed Him
With our palms
Shouting "Hosanna. Blessed is He that cometh
in the name of the Lord"
We were there when He cleansed the Temple Courtyard
Shouting "My Father's house was to be a house of prayer
But you have made it a den of thieves".
We had a place at the table in the upper room
When He instituted the Holy Communion
We were there in the garden of Gethsemane
His intimate prayer to the Father
His arrest
We were in the cold at the house of Annas, the palace of Caiphus
The Praetorium of Pilate
The palace of Herod
And the judgment seat of Pilate
We stood by as He was scourged
We walked with Him along the Via Dolorosa
As He carried the heavy cross to Calvary
We stood at foot of the Cross.

With John and with His mother Mary.
We wept as His lifeless body was lain across her lap.

On Friday, with the Apostles, we felt the crushing sadness
Their despondency
Their doubt
Their disillusionment

But today that all changed.

This man born in an obscure village
The child of a peasant woman
Who grew up in another village
Where he worked in a carpenter's shop,
Then became an itinerant preacher.

This man who never wrote a book
Never held office
Never had a family or owned a house
He did not go to college
Never traveled more than 200 miles
from the place of His birth;

This man who was only 30 years old when public opinion
Turned against Him
And His friends ran away;

This man who was turned over to His enemies
Convicted in a mockery of trials
Who was nailed to a cross between two thieves;
Whose garments, the only things He ever owned
Were gambled off by his executioners

When He was dead,
This man who was laid in a borrowed grave
Through the pity of a friend;

Even after 20 Centuries
This man remains the central figure of the human race
And leader of mankind's progress.

All the armies that ever marched
All the navies that have ever sailed
All the Congresses that have ever met
All the kings that have ever reigned
All the presidents that have ever served
All of that put together,
Have not affected the life of mankind on this planet
So much as that one solitary life
Of This Man.

Out of His tortured death on Friday,
Out of the sadistic loss of His life
Out of the innocent blood
On a Day we call Good,
Came the Victory.
Came the defeat of evil
Came the salvation of man
Came everlasting life for those who believe and are absolved.
His sacrifice was the Victory.
Our Victory.

But Today,
Today is the Triumph.

At first, the word went to just one woman, Mary of Magdela.
Then He appeared to the huddled Apostles that night.
Then, the word got out.
And it spread throughout Jerusalem like wild fire.
The Temple priests and elders were furious.
The Roman guards who had been guarding the tomb
Were speechless
It was during the Passover celebration so Jerusalem was swollen
with pilgrims
Some historians have estimated there were millions there.
As they traveled homeward, they took the story of Jesus

The Son of God

The Messiah
had risen from the dead
Just as He said He would.

And in a short time,
The Holy Land, the Levant, and Near East,
Knew the story.

Soon the word traveled to southern Europe
And then throughout Europe, Northern Africa, Persia
Despite it being a crime in the Roman Empire to worship in a
Christian manner, Christianity flourished.

But when Constantine removed the ban in 313AD
The Church emerged from the secret homes and caverns
And Christianity exploded across the globe.
It would later be called, the “Easter Effect”
the Triumph of the Resurrection became worldwide.

His Resurrection validated for the Apostles

All that Jesus said and did.
Their trust was justified,
Their faith restored.
Their Mission defined.

Can we even imagine their joy.

And so it is for us

These thousands of miles and these thousands of years later.

We celebrate the triumph of Resurrection

Every Sunday
but particularly this special Sunday of Resurrection.

We too are validated, restored and justified.

We too have our Mission defined:

To love God
To love our neighbors as Jesus has loved us.

On an Easter morning many years ago
The Sunday school teacher gave the kids plastic eggs
And directed that they walk the grounds
And fill their egg with something
that reminded them of Easter.

There were many different contents
A flower, a feather
A butterfly, a bug
A new green leaf
And she had the kids open their egg and describe its contents
And its significance.

There were symbols of Spring, new growth
New life and new birth
All of them the kids said reminded them of the Resurrection
And the new life Jesus had secured for us all.

But little Tommie's egg was empty.
The kids railed at him,
laughing that Tommie didn't follow the instructions.
You see, the other kids knew Tommie could never
Quite get things right.
He was slow and easily confused.
Today we might label him with one of the alphabet soup
Learning disorders and send him for evaluation.

The teacher had a gleam in her eye and tried to salvage the
situation
She asked Tommie about his egg.
After some awkward stammering
Tommie said.
His egg was empty
Just like the tomb that held Jesus was empty.
And everyone had a new opinion about little Tommie after that.

Tommie's empty tomb is perhaps the symbol of the day.

Following our Communion with Him,
We will sing a hymn on our knees,
An ancient hymn from Cologne written in Latin in 1695
the lyric came to us in English 170 years later

It's a hymn that says it all:

“The strife is o’re, the battle done,
The victory of life is won
The song of triumph has begun.

The powers of death have done their worst
But Christ their legions hath dispersed;
Let shout of holy joy out burst.

...

Lord! By the stripes which wounded thee
From death’s dread sting thy servants free,
That we may live and sing to thee.”

Alleluia. The Lord is Risen. Alleluia.