

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Easter
April 5, 2026
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 in horror as He was scourged
We walked with Him along the Via Dolorosa
As He carried the heavy wooden 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, we felt the crushing sadness with the Apostles
Their despondency
Their doubt
Their disillusionment. Was it all for nothing?

But today all that changed.

This man born in an obscure village in Judea
The child of a peasant woman
The boy who grew up in a Galilean 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 100 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 innocent 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 missiles that every flew
 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 swirled around the Mediterranean,
And then throughout Europe, Northern Africa, Persia, India
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? Their hope?

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 Easter Sunday, 1969; in the 4th year of his captivity
And from the depths of his pain and isolation,
An American Aviator
Was held in a Hanoi prison for 8 years.

8 years of starvation, disease and torture
at the hands of his savagely brutal jailers.

His name was Jeremiah Denton.

While separated from his church by a dank, foul prison cell

He was never separated from God.

And he wrote this of the crucifixion:

“The soldiers stare, then drift away
Young John finds nothing he can say.
The veil is rent, the deed is done;
And Mary holds her only Son.
His limbs grow stiff; the night grows cold,
But naught can loose that mother’s hold.
Her gentile, anguished eyes seem blind,
Who knows what thoughts run through her mind?
Perhaps she thinks of last week’s palms,
With cheering thousands off’ring alms
Or dreams of Cana on the day
She nagged him till she got her way.
Her face shows grief but not despair
Her head, though bowed, has faith to spare,
For even now she could suppose
His thorns might somehow yield a rose.
Her life with Him was full of signs
That God writes straight with crooked lines.
Dark clouds can hide the rising sun
And all seems lost when all is won.”

Jeremiah Denton was the POW who was forced to appear on a
North Vietnamese propaganda television broadcast
And blinked the word "torture" in Morse code.
He was the first POW to get off the plane in the Philippines
he remained in the Navy,
served for 34 years
and was promoted to the rank of Admiral.

He served in the United States Senate

In his poem, Denton captured that ray of Hope
Embedded in the Crucifixion
that is bursting forth today.
The Hope that must have brought him home
And has inflamed mankind.

So with the backdrop of the unassailable Victory
Filling our senses,
With the undeniable truth of the Historic Resurrection
Firmly in mind;
The Hope erupting from Resurrection
Is the Victory within us all.

Now, the question for us is this:
Jesus has given his life
That we may have new life.
Every drop of His blood
And His agonizing death,
Was for us,
For our salvation,
For our eternal life.

What will we do with that new life?

“Today is the day the Lord hath made
let us rejoice and be glad in it”

Alleluia. The Lord is Risen.
He is Risen indeed. Alleluia.