

The God who Pursues Us

2018-04-01 - Year B - Easter Sunday - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas

- Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!
- Christians around the world and from every denomination view this day (or for orthodox Christians, next Sunday) as the most important celebration of the whole year!
- This is the day when we remember that after laying dead in the tomb for three days, Jesus rose from the dead!
- But why is it so important? It is remarkable, and miraculous, and amazing that Jesus rose from the dead, but what difference does the Resurrection make in my life?

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

- St. Peter declares in the book of acts that “*everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*” (Acts 10:43, ESV)
- To sin is to disobey God. To miss the mark of God’s best for us.
- When we sin, we might feel some temporary, fleeting pleasure, but when the temporary pleasure goes away we are left feeling empty, broken, dirty, ashamed, embarrassed and we want to hide. This is how sin separates us from God.
 - This is exactly what Adam and Eve did after the first sin
 - You can’t hide from God, he knows where you are and he knows what you have done. Psalm 139:7-12
 - When we sin, God comes after us, and we run like a criminal evading the police.
- We run from God out of fear.
 - Fear of God’s punishment
 - Fear of losing what we know, things that comfort us even as they destroy us.
 - We run from God seeking happiness, when all the time God is the true source of happiness.
 - “Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee” (Augustine, Confessions).
- God is willing to following you into the darkest, most sinful places to rescue you, restore you, and bring you back. He was willing to go into death itself to bring you back to life.
 - He’s not out to get you, or yell at you, or strike you with lightning bolts. He’s coming after you because he loves you and he wants you back. He misses you.
 - Even as you continue in your sin, Jesus is right there next to you saying, “I can help you with that if you will let me.”
 - But he will never force you to accept his help. He will continue to pursue you, waiting patiently until you are ready.
- You can’t save yourself. You can’t do it on your own. The more you sin, the more you are captive to sin like a barbed fish hook digging deeper and deeper. The embarrassment, the shame, the addiction, all of these become chains which bind us. You need the power of Jesus’ resurrection to unlock these chains and set you free.
 - You can try to escape, you might even have some temporary victories, but when things get hard, you slip back into what you know.

- There are so many people who deeply desire to return to God, but they think they have to get rid of all of their sin first.
- That is like a seriously sick person with a life-threatening illness saying that they intend to go to the hospital but they want to get better first.
- The Church is not the place where people go when they get it all figured out, rather, it is the place where people go to be healed by the love of Christ and encouraged by other sinners who are in the process of healing too.
- We need each other, and we need you too. You are welcome here!
- I'm sorry, thank you, please.

New and Abundant Life in Christ

- Romans 6:3-5 - Baptized into Christ's death and united with him in resurrection
- They say there's a heaven for those who will wait / Some say it's better but I say it ain't / I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints / The sinners are much more fun
 - Pie in the sky when we die.
 - The Christian faith isn't about waiting around to die so we can get to heaven
 - It is also not about deferring fun and joy in this life so we can have it in the next!
- John 10:10 - Abundant life
 - The Christian life is filled with love, joy, peace, laughter, relationships, belonging, support, encouragement, and hope.

Hope for the Future

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 - We do not grieve as others do who have no hope.
- Revelation 21:4 - For those who put their trust in Jesus, This is where we are going.
- The resurrection was the decisive moment in the war which points to the final victory.
- Everything sad is coming untrue!

Conclusion

- Exsultet: "How holy is this night when wickedness is put to flight, and sin is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord. How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined, and Man is reconciled to God."
- Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!