

Osler Mennonite Church

Sunday Worship Service

April 26, 2020

Worship leader: Patty Friesen

Song leaders: Kathryn Janzen &
Michelle McKinnell &
Lynette Janzen

Pianist: Naomi Schellenberg

Sermon: Julie Bergen

Sound: Stephanie Siemens

Prelude & Welcome

A warm welcome to each one streaming with us this morning and listening on transmitters as we gather again on this beautiful treated land that springs forth with new life.

Announcements

Please join us tonight for the Rosthern Junior College fundraiser at their website rjc.sk.ca. We have to imagine our future leadership out of this crisis so we invest in leadership training at Rosthern Junior College. The spring weather enables us to engage a little more at safe distance outdoors. Drop-in Outdoor coffee coming to OMC parking lot on Friday mornings between 9:30-11:00. We will set out chairs and please bring your own coffee mugs. Overflow will move to the grassy yard. We have young chalk artists ready to decorate elders' driveways so if you want a colourful driveway, let Patty know. We have Zoom Bible Weds at 1:00 (Acts 2:42-47, Psalm 23, 1 Peter 2:19-25, John 10:1-10), Executive Zoom at 6:00 and Council Zoom at 7:00. We are thankful for those leading worship this morning and those serving in healthcare: Julie, Naomi and Lynette. Let's give them a hand.

Call to Worship

L: O living God, who raised Jesus from the dead, we shout your great victory; we sing hymns of praise!

C: Even when our hearts are heavy and our eyes are dimmed by sorrow, you are faithful. You wipe away all tears and bring joy in the morning.

L: Teach us, O God, to trust your gracious love, to rest in your unfailing goodness, to hope in your true promise, that we may rejoice all our days and share the good news: death is defeated; all are made alive in you.

All: Alleluia! Amen! Alleluia! Amen!

Invocation

Resurrecting God, thank you for gathering us safely again this morning and for your renewed love every day. Thank you for this week of spring weather that enables us to engage each other and you. Guide us in our worship and as we discern the days ahead.

Hymn: Jesus Christ is Risen Today #376

GOD WITH US

376 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

He has risen! He is not here. Mark 16:6

1. Je - sus Christ is risen to - day,
2. Hymns of praise, then, let us sing,
3. Sing we to our God a - bove, Al - le - lu - ia!

Our tri - um - phant ho - ly day,
Un - to Christ, our heaven - ly King,
Praise e - ter - nal as His love: Al - le - lu - ia!

Who did once, up - on the cross,
Who en - dured the cross and grave,
Praise Him, all you heaven - ly host, Al - le - lu - ia!

Suf - fer to re - deem our loss,
Sin - ners to re - deem and save,
Fa - ther, Son and Ho - ly Ghost, Al - le - lu - ia!

1 Peter 1:3-9 English Standard Version (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to God's great mercy, God has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this we rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, we have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of our faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though we have not seen him, we love him. Though we do not now see him, we believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

Children's Time: Jesus and the Storm (Etta B. Degering)

Hymn: The Summons (*tune found in STS #39*)

The Summons

John L. Bell & Graham Maule/Scottish traditional

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

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Offering Prayer/Offertory

For the work of God that continues every day in new and creative ways - we give thanks for these gifts.

Psalm 16 (During Offertory music:)

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you."

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight...

...The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;

in the night also my heart instructs me.

I have set the LORD always before me;

because God is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;

my flesh also dwells secure.

For you will not abandon my soul...,

or let your holy one see corruption.

You make known to me the path of life;

in your presence there is fullness of joy;

at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Sharing Joys and Concerns/Prayer of the People

We pray today for Nora's family grieving the death of their aunt. We pray for university students finishing up schoolwork and waiting on summer jobs. We pray for Kaytee Edwards Buhler who has been furloughed from MCC and tree-planting this summer. We pray for Portapique, Nova Scotia with the following prayer from Pastor Rachel Siemens from Carmen, MB. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. We bring you our broken hearts and place into your great care all of the lives lost in Nova Scotia in this rampage. We entrust their souls to your bountiful love which knows no end in time or eternity. Grant your strength and your comfort to the many people who are working to help in Nova Scotia and all of us these days: for first responders, investigators, funeral directors, mayors and town councils, for pastors and journalists, and those whose work goes unnamed. We pray for all who grieve – for Nora's family. We pray for all who are waiting for jobs, for our church camps and schools, asking a blessing of vision and courage for Rosthern Junior College tonight. God of compassion and mercy, we offer you our prayer in the strong name of Jesus, Our Risen Saviour, who taught us to pray, Our Father...

HWB #557 O God, in restless living

FAITH JOURNEY: Suffering/Joy

577 O Love that will not let me go

ST. MARGARET 88. 886

1 O Love that will not let me go, I rest my
2 O Light that fol-lows all my way, I yield my
3 O Joy that seek-est me through pain, I can - not
4 O Cross that lift - est up my head, I dare not

wea - ry soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe, that
flick - ring torch to thee. My heart re - stores its bor - rowed ray, that
close my heart to thee. I trace the rain - bow through the rain, and
ask to fly from thee. I lay in dust, life's glo - ry dead, and

in thine o - cean depths its flow may rich - er, full - er be.
in thy sun - shine's blaze its day may bright - er, fair - er be.
feel the prom - ise is not vain, that morn shall tear - less be.
from the ground there blos - soms red, life that shall end - less be.

Text: George Matheson, 1882, *Life and Work*, 1883
Music: Albert L. Peace, 1884, *Scottish Hymnal*, 1885

John 20:19-31

(On the first day of the week...) Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Scripture Response: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God within us, for the word of God among us. All: Thanks be to God!

HWB #614 In the bulb there is a flower

In the bulb there is a flower 614

PROMISE 87. 87D



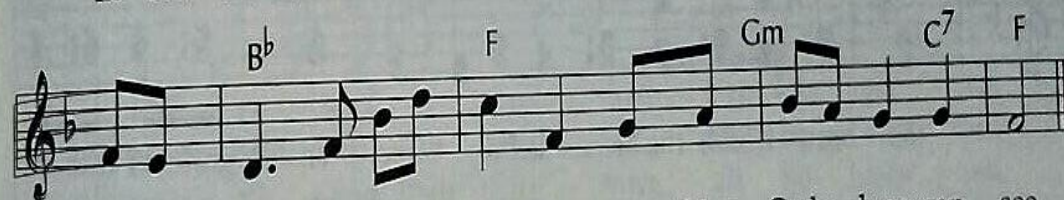
1 In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;
 2 There's a song in ev - 'ry si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy.
 3 In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;



in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise: But - ter - flies will soon be free!
 There's a dawn in ev - 'ry dark - ness, bring - ing hope to you and me.
 in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.



In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,
 From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,
 In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,



un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

Text: Natalie Sleeth, 1985

Music: Natalie Sleeth, 1985

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Sermon: Gathered Together by Julie Bergen *John 20:19-31*

Peace be with you. Christ is risen.

In our current reality facing restrictions associated with Covid-19, I saw a picture in the paper of a church sanctuary where the pastor had printed photos of the congregation members and taped them to the pews so that she could speak to the congregation rather than to an empty church. Surprisingly, in that church it seems that everyone sat in the front three rows! It would be great to be able to see you here, but if I could, I would tape your photos to the spaces in this sanctuary where you generally choose to sit – your space of comfort and familiarity that represents your belonging in this community. For those joining us who don't usually worship here, we hold space for you.

This morning we pick up where we left off on Easter morning, with the resurrection account from John. In this text we hear of Jesus' first appearance to the disciples since the resurrection accounts witnessed at the open tomb.

We find the disciples gathered in a room. Notably, the gospel writer lets us know that the door is locked. It is with no small amount of fear that the disciples sit together rehashing the story of the previous days. The early church community saw itself as a persecuted religious minority, and there is some irony that they are hiding "for fear of the Jews" and into this setting the resurrected Jesus, of Jewish heritage, suddenly stands among them offering them peace. Jesus' words, "Peace be with you", use a plural form of "you". Peace is offered for the group as a whole. Their fear creates boundaries, but peace is offered to all.

It is following this gathering of Jesus and the disciples that we meet Thomas. The disciples tell Thomas, who missed that first appearance, the story of Jesus' visit. And it is here that Thomas receives an unfortunate label that follows him to this day. Thomas doubts. In fact, just like any of us might, Thomas's early hesitation to get on board with his friends' excitement grows more effusive in correlation to their insistence – unless he sees Jesus with his own eyes – no, unless he puts his finger in the wounds on Jesus' hands, his hand in the wounds on Jesus' side, he simply can't believe.

So many emotions. These few verses, that follow the maelstrom of feelings reflected in the gospel account of the build up to Jesus' passion, crucifixion, and resurrection, reflect the many emotions that the disciples experienced as they gathered together – the fear, the hope, the hint of joy and peace, the doubt and hesitation, the calm of faith in the midst of the storm.

We are in a season of many emotions. The experience of physical distancing in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has left each of us with a great deal of space in which to experience isolation, fear, and anxiety. We feel concern for the economy, for business owners and employees, we feel the worry of parents struggling to arrange childcare, the worry of those who have no work. Anger feels close to the surface in the midst of this time when we are confronted with fear, injustice, and the potential for both physical and emotional hurt. The overwhelming

concern for people who are homeless and marginalized fuel calls for compassionate and creative change. Grief is a reality we experience in the midst of loss – loss of routine, loss of comfortable obliviousness to risk, and anticipatory loss as we worry for the well-being of our loved ones.

There are other feelings as well. Hints of joy and peace as we experience the slowing of our schedules and the opportunity to spend more intentional time with people and pets, either in our homes or by phone and video. With the restrictions we are experiencing, there is also a promising hope when our routines open to allow for the activities that feed our spirits and connect us with the transcendent. Planning for spring planting, reading the book we've had sitting on the shelf, finding the inspiration for creating something with our hands, spending time in silence, breathing, praying.

Our experience of this pandemic has sparked the sharing of stories. My mother has been remembering and sharing stories that were passed down to her, and she recently shared a story that I was told in childhood, but that connects more deeply in our current context. She told the story of my great-grandfather in a Mennonite village in Southern Manitoba, 100 years ago during the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic. He was the only one in the village not sick and spent his days going from one yard to the other, doing the chores and caring for the animals. At the end of the day he would fall asleep in his chair, exhausted. It was later, as others in the village began to recover that he took ill, run-down from the effort of caring for those around him.

Returning to the gospel story, I am struck by how my expectations of the resurrection is tempered by what we read here. Built up through years of Easter celebrations and 'Hallelujahs', it seemed as though the fear and the doubt would all have been cleared away. And yet, what we have recorded in John's gospel account is the relief and celebration of the resurrection alongside authentic human experience.

I have always felt compassion for Thomas who is forever dubbed 'doubting'. In truth, not only did Thomas doubt his friends' story, he was the only one willing to name his doubt. There is strength in that, being willing to question and wonder and express uncertainty. And what was the outcome when Jesus again joined the disciples and approached Thomas? There was no chastising for insufficient faith. Instead, Jesus offered acceptance and encouragement – Jesus confirmed that there was room for doubt. It was okay to not be sure.

We know from the scripture's careful notation that the door was still closed. The resurrection had come, God had triumphed over death, but the disciples were not without fear and concern. The disciples express their wonder and hope at the resurrection promise, but it did not erase the stress and trauma of the previous week in Jerusalem. They are changed by the experience, and the significance of the impact of fear and grief lead them to seek meaning. And this is the heart of the story, that grace is the outcome even as the storm of human experiences and emotions continue to swirl around. The change brought about by the resurrection is a balance point: "crucified AND risen", "afraid AND hopeful", "doubting AND believing."

Jesus' passion reflected commitment to a belief that said the world will be turned upside down, the marginalized will embrace power and influence, the poor will have plenty, the homeless will find comfort and belonging. It was this vision of wholeness that Jesus embraced, inspired in others, and for which he eventually suffered and died. In the resurrection we are sent out alongside the disciples, despite our doubt and our fear, into the world to carry this vision forward, to recognize that the kin-dom of God can be recognized on earth.

So, what does resurrection look like here and now?

Narrative therapy is a counselling process that supports people to tell their story and recognizes that we each have a significant story to tell. This is the story that generally comes out first when we feel safe and trust that someone is truly listening to us. This significant story is the one that tells us about who we are, what we believe, who we can trust. Each time we tell our story we learn more about ourselves and our story shifts and changes to reflect what we learn. Narrative therapy calls this process 'meaning making'. As the disciples told and retold their story they made meaning of what they had experienced and what they had witnessed. Thomas resisted having his story told for him. He wanted to make his own meaning, tell his own story.

As we experience our world in these days of pandemic, we also have our own stories to tell. These stories will include our suffering. Sometimes these stories include the questions "why?", 'why is this happening?', 'why me?'. When we reflect on the resurrection story told by the disciples, we recognize that this is okay – God offers us the grace of acceptance even in our doubt and uncertainty. However, we can continue to tell our story and adapt the meaning that we make. Kristen Neff, author of a book entitled "Self-compassion", encourages us to consider our shared human experience and to recognize that we are all in this together. Suffering can lead us to feeling isolated, and right now, in a state of self-imposed physical isolation, we easily feel alone in our suffering and can begin to see it as an individual experience rather than a shared part of humanity. Compassion means "to suffer with" and a fundamental element of self-compassion is the recognition of our essential interconnectedness. Opening ourselves to shared human experience allows us to suffer together – it does not remove the pain, but it lifts the burden of suffering alone.

We long for a time when this will be over. We hope for a time when the fear and the anxiety of these events will be past. And I encourage us each to continue telling our own story and to take time to listen to the stories of others, recognizing how we are changed, now and as this pandemic experience transitions and resolves. As governments plan for reopening economies and physical distancing restrictions are lifted, our stories will continue to adapt. Resurrection changes the meaning we make but doesn't remove the story, the story is a part of who we are. And as a resurrection people, we live in the midst of God's grace, where we can claim the promise "crucified AND risen", "afraid AND hopeful", "doubting AND believing."

*References: LectionaryGreek.blogspot.com; *Self-Compassion* – Kristin Neff*

Spoken Benediction

Risen Christ, when fear and doubt seem all that's left, tell us again the stories of faith. Touch us with your promised presence, and set our minds at peace. Amen.

Sung Benediction HWB #577 O love that will not let me go

FAITH JOURNEY: Suffering/Joy

577 O Love that will not let me go

ST. MARGARET 88. 886

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble clef and a bass clef, both in 4/4 time. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The melody is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are arranged in four systems, each with a corresponding line of music. The lyrics are: 1 O Love that will not let me go, I rest my wea - ry soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe, that flick - ring torch to thee. My heart re - stores its bor - rowed ray, that close my heart to thee. I trace the rain - bow through the rain, and ask to fly from thee. I lay in dust, life's glo - ry dead, and in thine o - cean depths its flow may rich - er, full - er be. in thy sun - shine's blaze its day may bright - er, fair - er be. feel the prom - ise is not vain, that morn shall tear - less be. from the ground there blos - soms red, life that shall end - less be.

1 O Love that will not let me go, I rest my
2 O Light that fol - lows all my way, I yield my
3 O Joy that seek - est me through pain, I can - not
4 O Cross that lift - est up my head, I dare not

wea - ry soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe, that
flick - ring torch to thee. My heart re - stores its bor - rowed ray, that
close my heart to thee. I trace the rain - bow through the rain, and
ask to fly from thee. I lay in dust, life's glo - ry dead, and

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Music: Albert L. Peace, 1884, *Scottish Hymnal*, 1885