

Acts 10:34-43

³⁴Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Matthew 28:1-10

²⁸After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Revelation 21:3-5

3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

5He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

“All Things New”
The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee
Easter Sunrise April 4, 2021

When I woke early yesterday morning in order to pray again with this morning’s scripture readings, I checked my e-mail, not expecting to see anything new since late the night before. I was therefore surprised to see a message from a man named Stephen Rajkumar, who is on the faculty of the American College in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, South India. I have never met Stephen Rajkumar, but we have been in correspondence since this past fall. The long story short is that he knows that I am a pastor who studied at Andover Newton, and his grandfather came to Massachusetts some fifty years ago to study for one semester. Stephen Rajkumar writes to me, because he is a Christian, and he knows that I am a Christian. The message I read yesterday morning was simple: Our Lord Jesus Christ is Risen!

That is not really as simple a message as I’ve said though. It wasn’t a simple idea to understand for the two Marys who first learned of it from an angel in blinding white, and who then were greeted by the man they knew had been brutally killed days before. Yet, they believed, and they went forward to proclaim this good news. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Risen! Not everyone believed it, though—not then, and not now. I have even heard from folks who *do* call themselves Christian that it may well be true, but the significance of Jesus having died and having been raised may not be all that it’s cracked up to be. It may have had everything to do with the people who knew him then, but for us, the real

importance of Christ's presence on earth had more to do with his life than with his death and resurrection. It's a good question, isn't it?

I am here to tell you that Jesus Christ is Risen *today*!! *Today* is the day I need to know that God loves us so much that God came to us, was willing to die for us, and overcame all that would keep us away! Today is the day we may well have lots of reasons to fear what may happen tomorrow. Some of us are battling illnesses that threaten to take our earthly lives. Some of us are battling addictions that threaten to take our sanity. Some of us are worried about our family and friends who are in battle in countries far away. Some of us are worried that we are at war at all. Some of us are battling loneliness or the fear of being lonely. Some of us are battling the demons that cause us to hurt others and even ourselves. And these are our concerns. Around the world, in the smallest villages and the largest foreign cities, people are worried whether they will have enough food to survive for another day. People are worried whether the water they give their children to quench their thirst will be the refreshment they need or the poison that may kill them. People fear that their freedom will be taken away without just cause.

Into our world of fear came Jesus Christ, son of Mary, man of Nazareth. Into our world of fear *comes* Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, present in the breaking of the bread and present when we follow the commandment with which he left his disciples. Yet, for people who wonder what the significance is of Jesus having been raised from the dead, we have to ask if what we need to know from Christ is simply that we should love one another? Is what we need to know from Christ simply that we should turn the other cheek? This has to do with how we are commanded to treat one another, but this may not always remove our fears.

I know that in hearing from Stephen Rajkumar yesterday morning, I am hearing a proclamation of another kind. From a man who represents one person in a 2% minority in his country who believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and savior of us all, I hear the testimony of someone who believes in the promise of something new. Like Paul who reminded the disciples to testify to what they know to be true, we are commanded to

testify to the truth: Jesus Christ is risen today! Because of Jesus' resurrection, we have hope for something different from all the problems of this world. We can meet with confidence the fears that cause us to stop in our tracks, because they do not have the last word. The last word we need to know with certainty is that we may stumble and fall; we may sin and we may have regrets, but this is not the end. God became incarnate, and promises to be with us eternally. "Now the dwelling of God is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Write these words down—on paper and on your tongues and on your hearts, I beseech you! Jesus Christ is Risen today, and the old order has passed away. Behold the new life is come! Alleluia, Amen!!