

Devotions – April 5-11, 2015
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Sunday, April 5 - The Resurrection of Our Lord (Easter Sunday)

Text: Luke 24:46-48

“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

We will return to this text each day for this coming week. These few words are chosen because there are so few words that are adequate to what we have witnessed. We have seen the raising of the dead. Christ has been released from his three day prison and we are released from all that imprisons us.

Easter means we can be raised – are being raised. Have you noticed? Turn around, wake up, embrace the promise of forgiveness and live. Open your eyes. Behold the redemption, the liberation, the enlivening of the whole world.

Let us pray:

O God,
whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples
in the breaking of bread,
open the eyes of our faith,
that we may behold him in all his redeeming work,
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.



Monday, April 6 – Easter Monday

Albrecht Durer (1528), Matthias Grunewald (1529) & Lucas Cranach (1553), Artists

Text: Luke 24:46-48

“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Fitting that very often these artists show up in the calendar of the church year during the great fifty days of Easter. Artists convey the wonder of the creation and display the human capacity for creativity and beauty. Open your eyes in these fifty days. Make a point of taking note of the beauty that is to be seen and heard around you.

In the catechism of the reformed churches (Westminster) the first question asked is, "What is the chief purpose of being human?" And the answer is, "To glorify God and enjoy God forever." We have been born and baptized to enjoy God and all that God has made. Are you enjoying these Easter days? What might help you see and enjoy beauty?

Let us pray:

Almighty God, beautiful in majesty, majestic in holiness:

You have shown us the splendor of creation in the work of your servant/s name/s .

Teach us to drive from the world all chaos and disorder,

that our eyes may behold your glory,

and that at last everyone may know the inexhaustible richness

of your new creation in Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever. Amen.



Tuesday, April 7

Text: Luke 24:46-48

"Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations. The Easter miracle, the gift of new and unending life in Christ, it is meant to be shared, proclaimed, passed around.

Whatever the sharing looks like for you, it starts with acknowledging the gift of repentance and forgiveness. If repentance has to do with turning around – coming to your senses, waking up, then who do you know, including yourself, who wouldn't benefit from paying closer attention, being more awake?

And in like manner, who do you know, including yourself, who is not carrying some burden that needs lifting, some act or imagined lack that begs for forgiveness.

The Easter news is that there is no sleep from which we cannot be wakened and no prison from which God cannot set us free.

Let us pray:

Almighty God,
you give us the joy of celebrating our Lord's resurrection.
Give us also the joys of life in your service,
and bring us at last to the full joy of life eternal,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.



Wednesday, April 8

Text: Luke 24:46-48

“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

You are witnesses of these things. Lutherans are not famous for our witnessing. Evangelism, like witnessing, is ground usually claimed by the more extroverted members of our larger Christian family. But this doesn't have to be so forever. Witnessing may never mean speaking in public or holding forth on street corners. I have known wonderful introverted witnesses. They witness by their constancy in worship, by their genuine care for one another, by a “long obedience in the same direction.”

This past week as a colleague was dying in the ICU of our local hospital, two friends stopped by to say goodbye to him. They sat with him, spoke to him, touched him. In so doing they witnessed to the death defying love of God.

Their act of tenderness will not show up on any numerical report of church membership growth, but then witness does not have numerical growth of congregations as its goal. Witness is aimed at determined, intentional naming of God's unlimited love.

Let us pray:

God of mercy,
we no longer look for Jesus among the dead,
for he is alive and has become the Lord of life.
Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ,
and help us to grow as your people
toward the fullness of eternal life with you,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.



Thursday, April 9

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian, (1945)

Text: Luke 24:46-48

“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24: 46-48)

The Easter promise of forgiveness for all nations leads Dietrich Bonhoeffer the teacher and martyr to say this in his classic book *The Cost of Discipleship*.

“Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are.”

Who have you judged recently including yourself who is entitled to grace?

Let us pray:

Almighty God,
your Holy Spirit gives to one the word of knowledge,
and to another the insight of wisdom,
and to another the steadfastness of faith.

We praise you for the gifts of grace imparted to your servant Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and we pray that by *his* teaching we may be led to a fuller knowledge of the truth we have seen in your Son Jesus, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Friday, April 10

Mikael Agricola, Bishop of Turku (1557)

Text: Luke 24:46-48

“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24: 46-48)

In the church we have two calendars. The temporal one that tells us whether we are in Lent or Easter or Christmas and the sanctoral one, which reminds us of the lives of the saints who have

gone before us. Today we commemorate Mikael Agricola who was the Bishop of Turku in Finland. He studied with Martin Luther and translated both the New Testament and the liturgy into Finnish. He is remembered as being well educated, moderate and conciliatory.

Who are the saints (not perfect people) who have been influential in your life? Who have helped shape and form you in the faith? Mr. and Mrs. Butler from the Methodist church of my youth are on my calendar. So is my grandmother. I don't so much remember things they said or did. I remember more simply who they were and especially who they were for me. Who do you remember? Who is in your calendar of saints?

Let us pray:

Almighty God,

you have raised up faithful bishops of your church,
including your servant Michael Agricola.

May the memory of his life be a source of joy for us and a bulwark of our faith,
so that we may serve and confess your name before the world,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.



Saturday, April 11

Text: Luke 24:46-48

“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24: 46-48)

One miracle of the resurrection is that it is not limited to our boundaries. Jesus admonition to proclaim the Easter transformation from death to life to all nations is not limited to political nations, but indeed is for the whole expanding universe.

The baptized people of God have witnessed what may be another “big bang” - the earth-quaking power of God’s defeat of death which changes everything. So, then what are the implications of resurrection and God’s promise to make all things new? What are the boundaries, if any, of God’s resurrecting power? What might making all things new mean for our communities, for the good earth, for our families for political discourse? Where and how is God’s newness breaking into your world – today?

Let us pray:

O God, you are the creator of the world,
the liberator of your people, and the wisdom of the earth.
By the resurrection of your Son free us from our fears,

restore us in your image, and ignite us with your light,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

