



WHERE THE DOORS OF THE CHUCH SWING OPEN ON THE HINGES OF LOVE AND PEACE

The Pastor's Portion

April 12, 2020

Spiritual Nourishment for the Soul



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JESUS CHRIST IS RISEN TODAY! HALLEUJIA

Today is a day to rejoice! Today is a day to behold the majestic power of a loving God who repeatedly gives us another chance to make things new and to re-create our world according to the will and the vision of God.

What will we do differently today to reflect this love? What will we do to honor the unconditional love that God has shown us?

O SLEEPER, TO AWAKE!

"I ORDER YOU, O SLEEPER, to awake! I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you were created in my image. Rise up, let us leave this place for you are in me, and I am in you. Together we form only one person and we cannot be separated!"

Remember: **LOVE ALWAYS WINS!**



Weekly Inspiration:

The rich Christian symbol of *resurrection* may be especially relevant here. Resurrection is a universal pattern of the *undoing of death*. The three Abrahamic religions, each in their own way, define God as the one "who brings the dead to life and calls into being what does not exist" (Romans 4:17). The pattern of incarnation, death, and resurrection revealed in "the Christ Mystery" was true long before Jesus of Nazareth, from the very birth and death of the stars to the entire circle of life on this planet. **Richard Rohr**

PLEASE JOIN US FOR VIRTUAL WORSHIP ON SUNDAY AT 11AM THROUGH ZOOM TECHNOLOGY ON YOUR COMPUTER OR THE PHONE.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/268033036?pwd=b1ZoeDFYSzdFV3A5M0hSNFpTamtVZz09>

Meeting ID: 268 033 036

Password: 170245

Dial In:

+16465588656

Access code:268033036# US (New York)

JOIN US FOR MID WEEK BIBLE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY AT 7PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/506186798>

Meeting ID: 506 186 798

Dial: 16465588656, Access Code:

506186798# US (New York)

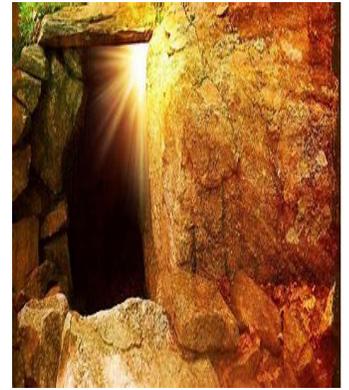
I AM CALLED

to help the poor,
the hungry, the thirsty,
the hurting, the abused,
the broken.

LET US PRAY: Gracious and merciful God, we thank you that you showed us your awesome power by raising Jesus from the rock hewn tomb. Now, oh God, do it again! Raise us from the dead. Raise us from our apathy and our arrogance, raise us from our insolence and ignorance! Raise us from our privilege and our pride, raise us from all the things that keep us from seeing inequities, injustice, suffering and pain in the world. Raise us from our limited and limiting ways of thinking about our role in the rebuilding of a Beloved Community where justice reigns, where peace reigns, where love abounds. Send your army of living angels to roll away the stone from our tombs and raise us from these spaces and places that blind us to your love, your grace and your mercy! And God, help us NEVER to return to a normal that was only working for a privileged few, and let us rebuild a society that looks the way you intend and want it to look. Help us oh God to stop looking for the living among the dead.

Amaze us God with your power to heal, with your power to restore, with your power to transform and set free and deliver! Help us God in these dangerous and perilous times.

Amen!



“Christianity is a lifestyle - a way of being in the world that is simple, non-violent, shared, and loving. However, we made it into an established "religion" (and all that goes with that) and avoided the lifestyle change itself. One could be warlike, greedy, racist, selfish, and vain in most of Christian history, and still believe that Jesus is one's "personal Lord and Savior" . . . The world has no time for such silliness anymore. The suffering on Earth is too great.”

~RICHARD ROHR

Opening Prayer: This is the day that the Lord has made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it, this is the day that we can come out of our tombs and begin to demonstrate and magnify your holy name! Thank you for the cross Lord. Thank you for the price you paid. Bearing all our sin and shame, in love you came and gave us amazing grace.

Hallelujah! We praise your mighty name, we magnify you and we bless your name! Lord, we come to you now rejoicing at the power you have demonstrated through the resurrection of your Son.

Manifest your power now oh Lord, to ease our heavy and repentant hearts. We come knowing that we have done nothing whatsoever to deserve the unconditional love that you pour out to us. But we love you God, and we worship you and we pray now that this service celebrating your power will be acceptable in your sight.

Prayer before preaching:
Now oh God, it is preaching time. Hide your servant behind the cross so that your people will hear a rhame word from you. Let the words of my mouth in

this season of a global pandemic be relevant, timely, and a word afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted. Come how holy spirit, come now heavenly dove, with all they quickening power. Kindle the flame of sacred love in these cold hearts of ours.

The Scripture says:

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body.^[a] ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women^[b] were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men^[c] said to them, **“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”**^[d]

⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James,

and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, **amazed at what had happened.**^[e]

Good morning church. And a blessed Resurrection it is. I struggled with what to preach on this Resurrection Sunday. This day when we are supposed to be celebrating and rejoicing that our Lord and our Savior has risen from the dead. But we are in times when we see nothing but death all around us. Numerous people I know personally have died. Here today, gone today, and I am grieving! And yet through our grief, through our sorrow, through our loss, today we rejoice! Because He is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed!!!

During this global health crisis, I have heard people say, Oh I can't wait to get back to normal. People have cabin fever, they need to be around each other, they need to get back to work. But the good news my friends is that there will NEVER be a return to normal, and there should not ever be a return to

normal. I wonder if the 16 MILLION people who are now out of work, those who realize how expendable and powerless they really are want a return to the illusion that was our global normal? I wonder if the people in the homeless shelters who have to be moved to sleep in parking lots because of the COVID outbreak want a return to normal? I wonder if the prisoners who are unjustly incarcerated want a return to normal? I wonder if the refugees in cages at the border with no health treatment want a return to normal. I wonder if the millions of people in India living in squalor unable to socially distance themselves want a return to normal? I wonder if the millions of people with no healthcare want to return to that normal. Somehow, I doubt it. The text this morning reminds me that just about a week ago, Jesus commanded the community to roll away the stone when he raised Lazarus from the dead. And now, upon his death, God had to send the angels to roll away the stone, because the disciples, those who professed undying devotion to Jesus, were too afraid, too impotent, too powerless, they lacked the courage of their

commitment to roll away the stone.

In fact, they were hiding in place when Jesus lay in his tomb, and it was the WOMEN who had the courage to go and try to tend to him, and it was the women who FIRST proclaimed the good news to the world.

See, you have to have courage to roll the stone away so that people can come out of their graves of despair and discouragement. But the disciples, the so called disciples in our global community, those in positions of strength and power to roll away the stone, will leave those grave stones right in place so that billions of people all over the world cannot rise up out of their graves of desperation, poverty, death and despair.

Go back to NORMAL? Well ,what is normal? Let me call the roll of what NORMAL is in our world: Right now, as we sit here, remember that these numbers are magnified 1000 times because of the pandemic:

On any given night IN THIS WEALTHY COUNTRY OVER ONE HALF A MILLION PEOPLE are experiencing homelessness.

- Globally More than 11 million people deemed

homeless and struggling to finding a place of shelter.

- **About 12%** of the [United States population](#), or **36,460,000** people, live below the poverty level.
- 30.1 million people under the age of 65 lack basic health insurance. (a little less than 10% of our population)
- 250, 000 are dying as a result of poverty and inequality every year.

In a country of such enormous wealth, and a country that is supposed to be one nation UNDER GOD, indivisible with liberty and justice for ALL. Clearly we are missing the mark. This is neither Godly nor Just! We need, a moral revolution! Oh, I hear you saying to yourselves, there she goes again preaching politics...But I am here to tell you as a faith leader, I have a moral imperative to speak to these times! And I cannot be silenced. The Spirit of the Living God is upon me, and I must speak truth.

Jesus was a Brown-skinned homeless refugee who led a moral revolution in his own time. Jesus, A Brown-skinned homeless refugee

led a moral revolution in his own time. In the midst of the kingdoms of this world, the kingdom of the Roman emperor Caesar, Jesus came preaching, teaching and proclaiming the good news that God's kingdom was near; A kingdom that affirms God instead of ignoring God. A kingdom that recognizes the equality, dignity, value and beauty of all God's children. A kingdom where justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Jesus' message led them to put Jesus to death by hanging him on a tree. This is the one we claim to follow.

They put Jesus to death. Then they placed him in a rock hewn tomb. He stepped down into the bowels of hell. He opened up a revival meeting in hell. He made mean folks love and dead folks live. He stayed down there until He had set the prisoners of hell free.

Oh, I'm about to really praise God, because here is the good news: After death, there is no pre-resurrection period. After death, there is a post resurrection semi-colon. What follows that semi colon is earth's strongest conjunction: BUT! That strong conjunction totally changes and

transforms everything that preceded it whether positive or negative. Tragedy is transformed into hopes. Sin is changed into grace. And death is transcended by life.

Jesus was crucified on the cross
BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM
THE DEAD!

Like Jesus, we need to rise up from tombs of despair and poverty and injustice, rise up from corruption and greed, rise up from apathy and lethargy to begin to live, love and serve. And we can do it because the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is in us.

Why are we looking for living among the dead? Why are we looking to get back to normal when normal was so ungodly?

The good news of the Resurrection of Jesus is that God raised him from the dead. God can raise us from the dead. God wants to raise us from the dead, but some of us want to stay dead, and see others stay dead because it benefits them economically and socially and politically.

I have been amazed that in this season where we are being called to be still and know that God is God,

where we are being called to be still and stay put in our homes, some of us are unable to do that. There are those who are ignoring the order, and then there are those who although we are home, are finding all kinds of ways to stay as busy as possible and not listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

We can't stay still long enough to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. Instead we watch endless TV or Netflix, or reruns of hallmark Christmas movies; we work on numerous neglected projects, as though they are so important, we read, we sleep, and we zoom, talk on the phone, etc. What is it with us? Some people just like to complain, they are never happy no matter what the situation is. If they are too busy, they want a break, when they get a break, they complain that there is too much time on their hands. We just can't be content, and God forbid we sit still and listen.

Many of you will emerge from this Resurrection season saying, well that was the worst resurrection Sunday and Easter Season I ever had! We will fail to have gratitude that we are even here to celebrate that God raised Jesus from the dead! We will fail to be grateful that

we have the breath of life in our bodies and that we live to tell the story! We will look back on the past, and anticipate the future as though they matter more than the present moment! We will miss the point that the NOW is all we have that the NOW is all our lives will ever be. Our lives are never Not Now moments of grace and mercy. We don't read the warning signs, or even notice the ways in which God is showing up in big and small ways in this pandemic.

But God raised Jesus from the dead! God wants to raise us from the dead! God wants to do a whole new thing NOW, do you not perceive it?

Beloved, let us be ever mindful of the presence of God on this Resurrection Sunday! Let us be mindful that just as God raised Jesus from the Dead, God can raise us from the dead.

There will be glory after this. God will get the glory with or without us. And that my beloved is good news!

Let us Pray:

Gracious and merciful God, we thank you that you showed us your awesome power by raising Jesus from the rock hewn tomb. ,Now, oh God, do it again! Raise us from

the dead. Raise us from our apathy and our arrogance, raise us from our insolence and ignorance! Raise us from our constant complaining and our privilege and our pride, raise us from all the things that keep us from seeing inequities, injustice, suffering and pain in the world. Raise us from our limited and limiting ways of thinking about our role in the rebuilding of a Beloved Community where justice reigns, where peace reigns, where love abounds. Send your army of living angels to roll away the stone from our tombs and raise us from these spaces and places that blind us to your love, your grace and your mercy! And God, help us NEVER to return to a normal that was only working for a privileged few, and let us rebuild a society that looks the way you intend and want it to look. Help us oh God to stop looking for the living among the dead. Amaze us God with your power to heal, with your power to restore, with your power to transform and set free and deliver! Help us God in these dangerous and perilous times.