

**First Presbyterian Church-Rouses Point  
April, 19 2020- Virtual Worship**

Greeting

PRAYER OF PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Lord, we come to you this day, in worship, seeking peace and release from our fears and our darkness. May we feel your presence as we worship from our homes. Let the light of your salvation and hope shine on us, in us, and through us, that healing and hope may abound in your world.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Though darkness seems to envelop us.

**P: Jesus breaks through with a word of peace.**

L: Fears are banished!

**P: Hope is more than restored.**

L: Let us praise the Lord!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Hear our confession, O Lord, for we admit that even though we have come through the joy of Easter, sometimes we doubt. Like Thomas who walked the Judean countryside with Jesus, we still have trouble believing. When fears overcome us, we can slip back into the darkness of doubts. Forgive us we pray, and help us to witness to Christ's resurrection, whether confined at home, or having to work outside the home during this dangerous time. In the name of our Risen Lord and the hope he provided we pray. Amen  
ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Readings and Proclaiming God's Word

Old Testament: Psalm 16

New Testament: John 20:19-29

Sermon "Fear And Faith In A Time Of Waiting"

Affirmation of faith: Apostle's Creed

Prayers of the People

**Lord's Prayer**

\*Benediction

ONE OF OUR EASTER HYMNS OPENS WITH: "CHRIST IS RISEN, SHOUT HOSANNA, CELEBRATE THIS DAY OF DAYS."

AND THE THIRD VERSE PROCLAIMS: "CHRIST IS RISEN, EARTH AND HEAVEN NEVER MORE SHALL BE THE SAME. BREAK THE BREAD OF NEW CREATION WHERE THE WORLD IS STILL IN PAIN.

TELL ITS GRIM DEMONIC CHORUS, CHRIST IS RISEN GET YOU GONE. GOD THE FIRST AND LAST IS WITH US, SING HOSANNA EVERYONE."

THIS HYMN EXPRESSES THAT THE JOY OF EASTER AND THE EASTER SEASON INCLUDES, BEING ENCOURAGED TO FACE OUR FEARS, IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THEM.

TODAY WE ARE CALLED TO LET THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, AND THE NEW LIFE HE PROVIDES FOR US TO HELP US FACE ANY FEAR, PAIN, AND SORROW CREATED BY THE VIRUS.

CHRIST IS RISEN! THE COVID-19 VIRUS HAS CHANGED MANY THINGS AROUND THE WORLD, SOME THINGS WE MAY NOT YET BE AWARE OF, BUT IT CANNOT CHANGE THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

THE POWER OF EASTER REMAINS 365 DAYS A YEAR, EVERY YEAR, NO MATTER WHAT. "CHRIST IS RISEN, SHOUT HOSANNA!"

THIS BRINGS US TO SEVEN WORDS THAT COME TO MIND, THIS YEAR TO DESCRIBE EASTER.

THESE ARE NOT THE ONLY WORDS TO CHOOSE, PERHAPS THEY ARE NOT THE SAME WORDS I MIGHT PICK ANOTHER YEAR.

BUT FOR APRIL OF 2020 THESE ARE THE ONES THAT SEEM MOST FITTING:

RISEN, JOY, TRIUMPH, PEACE, AND HOPE, ARE THE FIRST FIVE. THE FINAL TWO ARE: FEAR AND WAITING.

THESE LAST TWO WORDS MAY NOT BE OBVIOUS, AND YET THEY ARE BIBLICALLY INSPIRED.

FEAR, IF WE THINK ABOUT IT, IS OFTEN COMPLICATED, IT CAN BE MIXED WITH HOPE AND JOY, AND FAITH.

REMEMBER, THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT FEAR WAS PRESENT WHEN THE TOMB WAS DISCOVERED TO BE EMPTY, AND AT THE APPEARANCE OF ANGELS.

EVEN AFTER THE WOMEN ANNOUNCED THEY HAD SEEN AND SPOKEN WITH JESUS, FEAR REMAINED WITHIN HIS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS.

THIS FEAR, WAS PERHAPS IN PART THAT THE NEWS WAS NOT TRUE. AND IF SO WHAT CAUSED THE WOMEN TO BELIEVE THEY HAD SEEN JESUS, AND WHERE WAS HIS BODY?

BUT IF IT WAS TRUE THAT JESUS IS RISEN, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN FEAR OF WHAT HE WOULD SAY TO HIS ELEVEN DISCIPLES.

WOULD JESUS BE ANGRY WITH THEM? WOULD HE FORGIVE THEM OR WOULD HE REJECT THOSE WHO DENIED AND ABANDONED HIM?

THERE WAS ALSO FEAR, THAT THE AUTHORITIES MIGHT COME AFTER INNER CORE OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

OF COURSE, NOT EVERY ONE HAD THE SAME FEAR. THEY WERE STRESSED BY DIFFERENT THINGS. AND MAY BE EVEN ONE OR TWO HAD LITTLE RECOGNIZABLE FEAR OR ANXIETY.

BUT JUST BECAUSE NOT EVERY ONE OF THE DISCIPLES WERE AFRAID, OR AFRAID OF THE SAME THING, DID NOT MAKE THE FEAR THE OTHERS FELT LESS REAL OR VALID.

SIMILARLY, TODAY CHRISTIANS ALL OVER THE WORLD FACED EASTER IN FEARFUL CIRCUMSTANCES.

AND WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THIS EASTER SEASON WITH VARYING THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.

SOME ARE MORE ANXIOUS THAN OTHERS. AND OUR FEARS ARE NOT ALL THE SAME.

SOME ARE AFRAID OF THE DISEASE ITSELF AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY OR LOVED ONES ARE INFECTED.

SOME HAVE TO WORK IN PUBLIC, AND SO THE RISK IS HIGHER AND THE STRESS ON THEM GREATER.

OTHERS ARE FEARFUL OF THE DEVASTATION THE SHUT DOWN IS CAUSING TO THE ECONOMY, THEIR TO OWN BUSINESS, JOB, OR THEIR FINANCIAL STABILITY.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO CANNOT PAY BILLS, WHO NEED FOOD. AND SOME NEED OTHER ITEMS THAT CANNOT BE FOUND RIGHT NOW.

THERE ARE FARMERS WHO HAVE TO DUMP MILK AND DESTROY CROPS AND CANNOT SELL ANIMALS BECAUSE PROCESSING PLANTS ARE CLOSED.

A FEW MAY EVEN BE MORE FEARFUL THAT THE PANDEMIC MIGHT CAUSE A LONG-TERM SUSPENSION, OR EVEN THE DESTRUCTION OF SOME RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES.

WE DO NOT ALL SHARE THAT SAME FEARS, YET EVERYONE'S FEARS ARE REAL TO THOSE WHO FEEL THEM, JUST LIKE WITH THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

WE, LIKE THEY WERE, ARE IN A TIME OF WAITING. THE FUTURE IS HOPEFUL, YET UNCERTAIN.

FAITH AND FEAR, JOY AND SORROW MINGLE TOGETHER IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MANY.

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS CAN BE FOUND IN NATURE. ONE SIGN THAT THE WINTER IS ENDING AND SPRING BEGINNING, IS THE APPEARANCE OF THE CROCUS.

EVEN DURING AN EARLY SPRING SNOWSTORM, THIS FLOWER CAN STILL BLOOM.

SIMILARLY, CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT SEEM IMPOSSIBLE AT TIMES, BUT FAITH IS WHAT MOVES US TO BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISES.

BUT SOMETIMES FAITH, LIKE THE CROCUS MUST STRIVE TO BREAK THROUGH HALF FROZEN GROUND, OR ENDURE A SNOW FALL.

THIS OFFERS A PICTURE OF HOW FAITH AND JOY CAN COEXIST IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR AND DOUBT.

SO WITH THIS IN MIND LET US, LOOK ONCE MORE AT THE GOSPEL STORY.

THE EVENING OF THE FIRST EASTER SUNDAY, MANY OF JESUS' DISCIPLES WERE GATHERED TOGETHER BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, FEARFUL AND WAITING, HOPING, AND PRAYING.

THEN JESUS APPEARED IN THEIR MIDST AND GAVE THEM HIS PEACE TO CALM THEIR FEARS.

THIS PEACE, BY THE WAY, IS WHAT JESUS STILL OFFERS TO US TODAY TO CALM OUR FEARS.

NO, CHRIST'S PEACE DOES NOT MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER. BUT IT CAN HELP US TO COPE WITH DIFFICULT OR TRAGIC SITUATIONS IN A BETTER WAY.

AND WHAT JESUS DID NEXT CAN ALSO HELP US, FOR HE BREATHED THE BREATH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THOSE GATHERED IN THAT ROOM, SO THEY KNEW THEY WERE FORGIVEN.

REALLY KNOWING GOD FORGIVES US IS THE FIRST STEP TO BEING ABLE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

SO IN OUR TIME OF WAITING WE ARE REMINDED WE ARE NOT ALONE, EVEN IF WE HAVE NO OTHER PEOPLE WITH US; BECAUSE THE PEACE AND FORGIVENESS JESUS PROVIDES ABIDES WITH US ALWAYS. AND SO DOES HE.

THIS IS GOOD NEWS TODAY, AND IT WAS GOOD NEWS FOR THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

AND YET A WEEK LATER, WHILE THEY STILL AWAITED WHAT THE FUTURE WOULD HOLD, THERE WERE SOME WHO STRUGGLED TO BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE APOSTLE THOMAS AND HIS RESISTANCE TO THE MESSAGE THAT JESUS HAD RISEN.

POOR THOMAS, HE NEEDED MORE THAN THE WORD OF OTHERS WHO HAD SEEN JESUS. THUS HE IS SADDLED WITH THE NAME "DOUBTING THOMAS".

BUT WE SHOULD NOTE, NOT BY JESUS. THE SAVIOR ACCEPTED THE FACT THOMAS HAD DOUBTS AND OFFERED TO HIM THE PROOF HE SAID HE NEEDED.

THOMAS REJOICED AT THE SIGHT OF THE LORD AND THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE.

THEN, HIS WORDS OF DOUBT WERE OVERCOME BY THE CONFESSION JESUS IS HIS LORD AND GOD.

THIS- IS AS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER AS IS THE FACT HE DOUBTED AND JESUS SAID BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND YET BELIEVE.

FURTHERMORE, WE SHOULD REMEMBER NONE OF THE ORIGINAL APOSTLES, BELIEVED WITHOUT SEEING. YET ALL WERE LOVED AND BLESSED BY THE LORD.

THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER WHETHER WE BELIEVE WHOLE HEARTEDLY, OR SUFFER FROM VARYING FORMS OF DOUBT.

JESUS LOVES DOUBTERS, AND EVEN DENIERS AS MUCH AS BELIEVERS AND FOLLOWERS, AND SO SHOULD WE.

WE NEED TO BE KIND TO OURSELVES AND TO OTHERS WHEN FEAR OR ANXIETY OR GRIEF, CAUSE US TO STRUGGLE DURING THIS UNCERTAIN TIME.

YES IT WILL END ONE DAY. BUT IN THE MEANTIME WE WAIT. IN THE MEANTIME WE HAVE THE JOY, HOPE, PEACE, AND TRIUMPH OF THE RISEN CHRIST, MIXED AT TIMES WITH FEAR.

BUT FEAR DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN WE DO NOT HAVE FAITH, SOMETIMES IT IS FEAR THAT DRIVES US TO GREATER FAITH.

THERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IN TODAY'S OLD TESTAMENT READING. IN IT THE FEAR OF THE PSALMIST LEAD TO PRAYER, FOLLOWED BY A DECLARATION OF FAITH.

PSALM 16 OPENS WITH A PRAYER FOR GOD'S HELP THAT COMES FORTH MORE AS A DESPERATE CRY THAN A PIOUS REQUEST.

BEHIND THE WORDS: "PROTECT ME. O GOD, FOR IN YOU I TAKE REFUGE", IS AN EXPRESSION OF FEARFUL WAITING.

YET VERSE TWO PROCLAIMS THE PSALMIST ALSO WAITS IN FAITH, TRUSTING GOD WILL HELP.

THE WORDS OF THE PASSAGE FLOW FROM THE HEART AND MIND OF ONE WHO HAS GIVEN HIMSELF TO GOD.

YES, THE PSALMIST TRUSTS THE LORD IS WITH HIM, EVEN IN DANGEROUS AND FRIGHTENING TIMES.

HE TURNS HIS ATTENTION AWAY FROM HIS SITUATION. HE LOOKS TO THE LORD, NOT IN DENIAL OF HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT IN FAITH THAT GOD WILL NOT ABANDON HIM.

THE PSALMIST EXPRESSED TRUST THAT EVEN WHILE IN GREAT NEED, HE EXPERIENCES: LIFE, JOY, AND PLEASURE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

SURELY THIS WAS THE EXPERIENCE THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS HAD, WHEN THE LORD APPEARED AMONG THEM.

IT IS OUR EXPERIENCE ALSO. THE PATHS OF LIFE NAMED IN THE PSALM, ALSO EXPRESS AN ETERNAL HOPE, NOT HOPE THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN THE PRESENT OR IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

INDEED, FOR CHRISTIANS JOY AND PLEASURE ARE PART OF OUR PRESENT AND ETERNAL LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

THIS IS THE CONTINUING MESSAGE AND MEANING OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION; AND THE POWER OF HIS PEACE AND FORGIVENESS, MINGLED WITH LOVE.

BUT OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS WHEN SINCERE, IS NOT PRIDE THAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED.

INSTEAD WE RESPOND WITH HUMILITY AND GRATITUDE; AS WELL AS A DESIRE TO SERVE THE LORD IN THE WAYS GOD CALLS US TO.

INCLUDED IN THIS IS COMPASSION AND PATIENCE, WITH OTHERS WHO STRUGGLE WITH FAITH, AND WITH OURSELVES WHENEVER WE MAY STRUGGLE.

LET US NEVER FORGET THAT JESUS APPEARED TO HIS FIRST FOLLOWERS NOT MERELY TO SHOW THEM HE WAS REALLY ALIVE AGAIN.

JESUS ALSO STOOD AMONG THEM AND SPOKE TO THEM IN ORDER TO OFFER HIS PEACE AND FORGIVENESS AND LOVE.

HE DID SO FOR THEIR SAKE, AND TO EMPOWER THEM TO BE HIS MESSENGERS OF PEACE AND FORGIVENESS AND LOVE.

TODAY JESUS IS AMONG US AS HE PROMISED TO BE, EVEN THOUGH WE CANNOT SEE OR HEAR HIM, OR EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE WITH ANY OF OUR FIVE SENSES.

HOWEVER THIS DOES NOT MAKE HIS PRESENCE LESS REAL. THUS THE SAVIOR'S WORDS FOUND IN JOHN 16:33 OFFER A MESSAGE OF HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR US:

"I HAVE SAID THESE THINGS SO YOU MIGHT HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE, BUT TAKE HEART, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."

PRAISE GOD, THAT EVEN IN TIMES OF FEAR AND WAITING THERE IS- JOY, HOPE, TRIUMPH, AND PEACE, TO BE FOUND IN OUR RISEN LORD. AMEN.

SERMON SUMMARY-APRIL 19- JOHN 20:19-31

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THIS BRINGS US TO SEVEN WORDS THAT COME TO MIND, THIS YEAR TO DESCRIBE EASTER. IN 2020, THESE ONES SEEM MOST FITTING: RISEN, JOY, TRIUMPH, PEACE, AND HOPE, ARE THE FIRST FIVE. THE FINAL TWO ARE: FEAR AND WAITING. THESE LAST TWO WORDS MAY NOT BE OBVIOUS, AND YET THEY ARE BIBLICALLY INSPIRED.

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BUT IF IT WAS TRUE THAT JESUS IS RISEN, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN FEAR OF WHAT HE WOULD SAY TO HIS DISCIPLES.

WOULD JESUS BE ANGRY WITH THEM? WOULD HE FORGIVE THEM OR WOULD HE REJECT THOSE WHO DENIED AND ABANDONED HIM? THERE WAS ALSO FEAR, THAT THE AUTHORITIES MIGHT COME AFTER INNER CORE OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

OF COURSE, NOT EVERY ONE HAD THE SAME FEAR. THEY WERE STRESSED BY DIFFERENT THINGS. AND MAY BE EVEN ONE OR TWO HAD LITTLE RECOGNIZABLE FEAR OR ANXIETY.

BUT JUST BECAUSE NOT EVERY ONE OF THE DISCIPLES WERE AFRAID, OR AFRAID OF THE SAME THING, DID NOT MAKE THE FEAR THE OTHERS FELT LESS REAL OR VALID. SIMILARLY, TODAY CHRISTIANS ALL OVER THE WORLD FACED EASTER IN FEARFUL CIRCUMSTANCES.

AND WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THIS EASTER SEASON WITH VARYING THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. WE DO NOT ALL SHARE THAT SAME FEARS, YET EVERYONE'S FEARS ARE REAL TO THOSE WHO FEEL THEM, JUST LIKE WITH THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

WE, LIKE THEY WERE, ARE IN A TIME OF WAITING. THE FUTURE IS HOPEFUL, YET UNCERTAIN. FAITH AND FEAR, JOY AND SORROW MINGLE TOGETHER IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MANY. THE GOSPEL SAYS THAT ON THE EVENING OF THE FIRST EASTER SUNDAY, MANY OF JESUS' DISCIPLES WERE GATHERED TOGETHER BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, FEARFUL AND WAITING, HOPING, AND PRAYING.

THEN JESUS APPEARED IN THEIR MIDST AND GAVE THEM HIS PEACE TO CALM THEIR FEARS. THIS PEACE IS WHAT JESUS STILL OFFERS TO US TODAY TO CALM OUR FEARS. NO, CHRIST'S PEACE DOES NOT MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER. BUT IT CAN HELP US TO COPE WITH DIFFICULT OR TRAGIC SITUATIONS IN A BETTER WAY.

AND WHAT JESUS DID NEXT CAN ALSO HELP US, FOR HE BREATHED THE BREATH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THOSE GATHERED IN THAT ROOM, SO THEY KNEW THEY WERE FORGIVEN. REALLY KNOWING GOD FORGIVES US IS THE FIRST STEP TO BEING ABLE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES AND OTHERS. SO IN OUR TIME OF WAITING WE ARE REMINDED WE ARE NOT ALONE BECAUSE THE PEACE AND FORGIVENESS JESUS PROVIDES ABIDES WITH US ALWAYS.

TODAY JESUS IS AMONG US AS HE PROMISED TO BE, EVEN THOUGH WE CANNOT SEE OR HEAR HIM, OR EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE WITH ANY OF OUR FIVE SENSES. HOWEVER THIS DOES NOT MAKE HIS PRESENCE LESS REAL.

PRAISE GOD, THAT EVEN IN TIMES OF FEAR AND WAITING THERE IS- JOY, HOPE, TRIUMPH, AND PEACE, TO BE FOUND IN OUR RISEN LORD. AMEN.