

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish
Newark, DE
The Day of Resurrection: Easter Day – April 16, 2017/Year A
Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 28:1-10
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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**“Good Christians all, rejoice and sing! Now is the triumph of our King!
To all the world glad news we bring:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!”
Hymn #205, The Hymnal 1982**

May my words reveal the greater glory of God in our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN

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Tell me, what do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Prior to the Lenten Season, I listen for God's word or phrase, advertisement or Facebook Post – I confess I have been ignoring SO MANY “tweets” these days – that will invite me to journey through Lent and Holy Week into this Easter Day. This final line from Mary Oliver's poem, **The Summer**, emerged at the time I needed to hear just these words ... ***Tell me, what do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?***

The invitation and journey for me is being realized in these **last time moments** with you, the people of St. Thomas's, as I move toward my retiring from ministry later this year. So, this is my last time sharing in Holy Week and Easter Day with you. Yet this invitation speaks to all of us, the people of St. Thomas's Parish, as we celebrate 175 years of ministry this year. We will celebrate, worship, and serve in wonderful and unique ways throughout the year. So save the dates as they arise for the events as we celebrate **what has been, who we are now, and looking to what we will be** as you invite the next priest to share in mutual ministry with you.

Tell me, what do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? This Sunday of the Resurrection bears this invitation in **two ways**:

- The first is with a **same old same old story** point of experiencing life. Easter does not change a thing in my life or my world, so we continue in our ways of **transmissional living**. We experience this way of life quite a bit in our rancorous time of societal and worldview actions, too much of it from very visible people holding offices supposedly to **serve others**. It flows out into our daily lives and workplaces as well in ways or words of **I am fine, you are not ... Bless me, change you!**
- The second is encountering the Easter story and call with a new heart into new life, to be new and renewed through **transformational living**. We see this lived out through our intentional change of life and living that shows THIS is what resurrection looks like. We

do not just talk the talk, we walk the walk of resurrection life by saying and showing **Change me, bless you!**

The invitation of the angel says best what **transformational living** really means – *“Do not be afraid ... GO ... TELL ...!!!*

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In order to embrace the events of Holy Week to Easter Day in a **transformational living ways**, we must open ourselves to the truth that the resurrection breaks all the rules we know so well. Everything we can control and explain is shattered. The former structures of the world there little left that we can lean on to prop up our ways of living and engaging in this new world and way.

It seems like life as we know it is just the **same old same old story** . There is still the government, the laws, Wall Street, and our jobs tomorrow. There are still Facebook communities perhaps virtually worshipping right now. There is still Twitter and “tweets”, Google and “googling”, Instagraming and Face Timing, the internet highway, and the mega gigabytes of information to peruse. **And there is yet another birth this day ... there is yet another death this day.** Like the snake that sheds its skin each year, we can experience and go into our world as this new creation we are becoming in this new skin that is us.

For those who question God’s presence in our world, the resurrection by itself can be a horrible joke. Whether to laugh or to cry may be the only question, the world’s last attempt to mock faith and hope. Yet like the rumbling of the organ, the rolled away stone and empty tomb of the resurrection changes the playing field. The playing field changes by **our living and proclaiming the power in the truth of the resurrection.**

Behold, everything is new! Our sanctuary was stark, bare, and deadly silent just three days ago. This newness renders the old ways of living powerless by the power we know through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is lived NOW in the hearts and souls, through the lips and lives, of each and every one of us. I hope this is what you believe for who wants more of the **same old same old story** that the world gives again and again. **The stone is rolled away ... the tomb is empty ... the supernatural happens in the natural we thought explainable world ... Jesus Christ is risen today!**

Theologian Karl Barth has claimed that most Christians are **“threatened by the resurrection.”** We do not want to admit that all the “freedom” we claim to have is simply too often a prison of faithlessness and hopelessness. We want to believe we have all power and control over the circumstances of our life. Yet in truth we are powerless in so many of the ways of our world. The freedom of our faith in God’s power working through our lives turns this Easter Day into our **transformational living!** The truth of the resurrection is that it **begins, continues, and ends in God.** It can never be mastered, achieved, or controlled by human willfulness.

The Day of Resurrection is OUR call to know and respond to the truth we see in the depths of human suffering, injustice, and death, and to LIVE in the freedom of God's promise of the empty tomb. The Easter story is our call, if we are to claim ourselves **Christian**, to live in this radical new "skin" of faithful living to which we are called right here and right now. **This world changing moment becomes real through our world changing lives ... Change me, bless you!**

The invitation of the angel says best what **transformational living** really means – ***“Do not be afraid ... GO ... TELL ...!!!”***

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In her book **In Search of Belief**, Benedictine sister Joan Chittister writes, ***“To say, ‘I believe in Jesus Christ ... who rose from the dead’ is to say something about myself at the same time. It says that I myself am ready to be transformed. Once the Christ-life rises in me, I rise to new life as well. ‘Christ is risen; we are risen,’ we sing at Easter. But it has a great deal more to do with life than with death. If I know that Jesus has been transformed, then I am transformed myself and, as a result, everything around me. Transformation is never a private affair. But it is always a decisive one. Until we find ourselves with new hearts, more penetrating insights, fewer compulsions, less need for the transient, greater awareness of the spiritual pulse of all that is life, Resurrection has not really happened for us. Resurrection is about transformation.”***

Jesus does not stay in the tomb of Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Jesus Christ is risen, and says to his disciples that *“... indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.”* Jesus and all who believe go back to the beginning, to the place and people where he started by proclaiming the words of the prophet Isaiah -- *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”* Jesus and the disciples go back to the beginning and go forward in **transformational living**.

Father Basil Pennington tells of an encounter he had with a teacher of Zen Buddhism. Pennington was on retreat, and part of the program gave the opportunity for each person to meet with a Zen Buddhist teacher who was living on the grounds. The Zen teacher sat before him, smiling from ear to ear and rocking gleefully back and forth. Finally the teacher said: ***“I like Christianity. But I would not like Christianity without the resurrection. I want to see your resurrection!”*** Pennington notes that the teacher was saying directly what many out in our world silently say to we who call ourselves Christian, ***“You are a Christian. You are risen with Christ. Show me what this means for you in your life and I will believe.”***

Transmissional living ... Transformational living ... it is our choice, this day!

“Do not be afraid ... GO ... TELL ... “Do not be afraid ... GO ... TELL ... “Do not be afraid ... GO ... TELL that Jesus Christ is Risen today! Alleluia! Alleluia!”