

Christ is risen! It's Easter Sunday and if you're watching this at about 10:00 o'clock in the morning - I'm not here. I'm at the church - doing some Easter Blessings in the church parking lot. So just put me on pause - get in the car - drive to the corner of main and exchange - and if you pull into the driveway by the church doors -you can unroll your window and I'll give you a blessing for your Easter - from the appropriate social distance of 6 feet away. So, go on. I'll wait for you here.
(waiting)

Ah, your back. Great! So, this morning I want to talk to you about being an Easter Christian in a Covid-19 world. We're living in unprecedented times - each and every one of us has felt the impact. The way we work, the way we live and relate to others, even the way we worship - all this has changed.

But in this time, we can take comfort in knowing that none of these events has taken God by surprise. God still remains the unchanging source of our strength. And even now, in the midst of fear and uncertainty in our world - we remember that we are the church. Our buildings may be closed but the church is still wide open because we know the church has never been a building - but rather - the presence of Christ within us, working through us with the power of the Holy Spirit to help heal a broken and hurting world.

Christ's People have never been immune to the hardships and suffering of this life. We endure, like everyone else, the many uncertainties of this world. But in it and through it, we know we are not alone. The Apostle Paul says, Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

I know this is not easy. I know that many of you are in situations that are challenging. I know that every day seems to bring more questions than it does answers and that we need answers, we need safety, shelter, information - we need an antidote to this virus... We've got a long list of what we need - but the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, isn't ultimately about having our needs met (as important as those are). Ultimately, the Good news of Jesus Christ is about what we already have. Or - more precisely - Who we have.

That first Easter, Jesus first appeared to the disciples. And the gospels all have different stories to tell about those Post-Resurrection appearances - some met him in a garden, some on the road, some met him on a beach, some met him coming back from an empty tomb. This Risen Christ passes through thick walls and locked doors to stand before traumatized disciples, breathing on them the Holy Spirit, breathing on them life and peace.

I love Matthew's description of that first Easter. Because Matthew says that Easter began with an earthquake - not just any earthquake - but a cosmic shift. "The whole earth shook", Matthew says.

God did something new at Easter. God made a way when there seemed to be no way. Through the Resurrection - the presence of Christ comes to dwell in us - and work through us, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to help heal a broken and hurting world. So, first, we are never alone. And second, by God, we've got a job to do.

You see, while Jesus walked on this earth, he could only be at one place at a time -limited in time and space -teaching, healing, loving, challenging, restoring - only to those within the range of his voice.

When Jesus died on the cross - he died our death, convinced us of our sin and God's willingness to forgive us, convinced us that his way of sacrificial life is the only way for us to have abundant life,

and on the cross he gives us a foretaste of heaven and our citizenship there - both now and after our deaths.

The disciples were the first witnesses to the resurrection. And Jesus would appear to many others over the course of 40 days. Before he ascended into heaven, he told us, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world."

And it wasn't as if he ascended so much as that he exploded - like one of those flowers that when it germinates - it explodes and scatters the seeds of itself everywhere. And where it lands and where it takes root, there is the presence of Jesus Christ.

Years ago, on a Sunday - We'd come back from church that morning, had a nice Sunday dinner and my niece Ami and I laid down for a Sunday afternoon nap. She was about 4 or 5 at the time and - I got the impression of what her Sunday School teacher's lesson must have been about - because just as I'm dozing off, Ami starts wiggling - and then she starts coughing and coughing. And I said, "*Ami, what's wrong? Why are you coughing like that?*" And Ami said, "*I just invited Jesus into my heart. But he got stuck on the way down.*"

Where can the Resurrected Christ to be found today? The most likely place - is in us. We are Christ's Easter People - called to bear Christ in the world - bearing the presence of Christ within us, working through us - with the power of the Holy Spirit - to help heal a broken and hurting world.

How can you be a Bear Christ - in a Covid19 world? Well a good place to start is that old question: What would Jesus do? But let me offer some suggestions: that you to keep following local and national mandates that are in place - in order to love and protect others as well as yourself. Call your neighbors, friends, family members with words of encouragement and hope. Pray for our neighbors - local and global. Pray for the front lines in this crisis - the medical personnel and first responders - Speak out against any xenophobia and racism that arises in the midst of this crisis.

And in the face of fear, season your words with faith, hope and love. Demonstrate the compassion, mercy and justice of Christ. So be the church. Know that you are never alone through this, Christ is with you. And may the light of Christ shine through you ever more brightly in these dark and difficult days.