

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Easter Sunday: April 9th 2023

“Coverage Confidence”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, indeed! Happy Easter and welcome to Christ the Lord Church. Please just take a moment to look around you. Take a moment to be grateful that we are here today, after what (so far) has been a tough beginning to 2023. So, does that beg the question, why are we here? Is Christianity a dying religion? My answer to that is “I hope so”. The religion called Christianity has a notorious history, and often strays from the teachings of Jesus himself. I like to focus more on Jesus than the rules of old. I want to follow Jesus and the Way. So why are we here? Today, Easter Day, is considered a new beginning.

As I came to do this sermon I couldn't get this little video clip of a commercial for car insurance out of my mind, and I truly had an “aha” moment. I will share this image with you today but leave out the advertiser's name. However, I imagine many of you will have seen the clip.

Imagine an empty reception area of a business when a red muscle car comes crashing through the wall. A man in a business suit jumps out of the driver's seat amidst the dust and rubble and states, “I'm Danger, I can strike anytime, anywhere”. Mr. Danger is then met by an insurance salesman who states that his company does not use scare tactics and asks Mr. Danger, “Why are you here?”

Part way through the insurance salesman's speech, Mr. Danger then goes on to explain that he knows the company offers "coverage confidence" and therefore does not need to have gimmicks or scare tactics. And while Mr. Danger slinks away - Aha!! The question remains, "Why are you here?"

Christ is Risen! It is Easter and we are here for the **eternal life** coverage confidence. Just as this insurance company states that they protect, support and are available when danger or bad things happen. Isn't that what knowing Jesus is? Isn't that what this glorious day is all about?

Jesus does not need scare tactics or gimmicks. We are here because we have had **love** walk the earth, we have had **love** model healthy ways to be, we have had **love** show us how to stand up for justice, all while still modeling grace and mercy. We have had **love** in the form of Jesus, both the living, the dead, and now the resurrected. We don't need scare tactics, we have coverage confidence.

Followers of Jesus do not need scare tactics. During his lifetime Jesus stated in many ways: "my burden is light, my yoke is easy". We have coverage confidence that even in our darkest days, Jesus is with us. In our most wonderful times, Jesus is with us, and yes, even in the most ordinary and mundane times, Jesus is there.

I can't tell you how many times I have prayed my way either in or out of a situation when necessary. Also - how many times, just knowing that our Lord died and rose again (showing us that this mortal life is not all there is) brings comfort to those who are leaving this world.

Knowing Jesus is learning about how love moves within oneself, one's friends, and even one's enemies, while including one's community. Being considerate, compassionate, patient, and all that comes with "putting up with people, or with situations" is sometimes hard to do. And that is also why we are here. We come to church, we come to worship, not only to praise God but to practice loving one another in a safe space.

Many Christians are living on the Calvary Side, or Born Again side of Easter by living as if Jesus died for their sins. They feel saved and maybe safe from danger in the afterlife, but they are living without the power, joy and the redemption of Easter because they are not living in love. They are not growing spiritually past the initial recognition of Jesus as Savior. And that is why we are here. Yes, these Christians have the aforementioned "coverage confidence" but it can ring empty.

I hope you are not here for scare tactics, all fire and brimstone. I pray you are here because you want transformation, you want change, you want resurrection. You want peace in your life. This is an extra beyond the coverage confidence. This is the true meaning of Easter.

Trust me, the Jesus that died on the cross with his mortal body, is not the resurrected Jesus that ascended into heaven. As we can see from today's scripture, there is some kind of transformation taking place even for Jesus as he tells Mary not to touch him. In other words, his transformation was not complete.

Today, we here at Christ the Lord offer you a chance to partake in the light of Christ, in the meal put forth by our Lord in remembrance of Him. We offer you a chance to mingle and meet others, some like yourself and some who are very different. We offer you the chance to transform, to be Jesus-like to each other in a place where all can be forgiven, even if only for a moment. That is why we are here.

The church itself and its traditional calendar offer much to the growth of those who are striving to grow spiritually. We begin with the resurrection, we go into a period of proclaiming and celebrating, we have “aha” moments, ordinary time, thankfulness, exciting waiting through the winter months and the birth of a new beginning.

It is a healthy thing to travel these spiritual times with a community. It is also a willful practice to participate in the personal exploration of the seasons.

We are here to learn, to grow, to forgive, to love, to be nourished and supported, all while knowing God is in our midst. We also know that when Mr. Danger shows up, Jesus is there also. Because when there are bumps along the way (and there will be, no matter where we are on our spiritual journey) we have coverage confidence.

Amen.