

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Third Sunday of Easter: April 14, 2024

Sharing the Love of Christ with the World

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on the third Sunday of Easter. Christ has risen, the Lord has risen indeed! Alleluia!

So, some of us in this church have been here a long time, certainly longer than me. Others came when I did in 2019, some of you may be new or very new; and with that said, I ask you, how many know Christ the Lord's mission statement?

It is after all, "Sharing the Love of Christ with the world". Did you realize that during all of Eastertide our Gospels are telling us to take these 40 days and learn about Jesus and how he clearly fulfills the scriptures? From the first appearance of Jesus to the disciples, to the time with Thomas, along with the road to Emmaus, all are of the recollections of first not recognizing Jesus is in their midst, then sharing the ancient scriptures, having Jesus open their hearts and minds, and then the sharing of a meal. Sounds like church.

We weren't with the disciples on that first Easter evening, of course. We were not blessed to be "witnesses to these things" in the same way. We didn't get to see the risen Jesus, to touch him, and to have him open our minds to the Scriptures. But those first disciples shared what they learned. They opened the minds of others, and we are part of that story.

And what they learned was eventually written down. And we are blessed to be able to read their inspired words, and to have our minds opened, too. We are blessed to be invited again today to turn from whatever we are placing our ultimate hope and trust in, and to place it in our risen Lord, Jesus. And then, of course, we are invited to go and bear witness to these things.

You are called to be witnesses of these things. You are called to bear witness to the good news of the Resurrection. You and I are called to go forth and proclaim to a confused world the simple, clear message of the gospel: That the Messiah suffered and died for our sins and for the sins of the world, and that God raised Him from the dead. And that we are invited to repent and believe this good news, that through him our sins are forgiven, and we can live in hope of eternal life.

And if you wonder just how you are to do this, there is a perfect example of it in our first reading for today, from the Acts of the Apostles. In this reading, Peter does exactly what the risen Christ commands him, and us, to do. Simply put, Peter bears witness to these things. He does this right after he and John have healed a crippled beggar. The crowd is surprised. But Peter says to them, do not be surprised by this, for it was done in the name of Jesus.

So, as you can see, when we are in church, we pray, we proclaim, and we break bread together. Although we are different people in a different era, we are part of this same amazing resurrection story. At first, we may not

recognize Jesus in our midst, but then we share stories, we break bread, and he is there.

Now I would like to go one step deeper. What we have Jesus doing when he meets with his followers is the connecting of the dots throughout history. For his Jewish companions he is explaining the prophets and stories that have led the Hebrew people to this particular time and space and he is the awaited Messiah.

He is sharing that God has been involved within their lives, generation upon generation, building a relationship with his people. I can imagine there is wiggle room in every cosmic plan however God would come to experience his own creation through a Messiah. And in doing so would share in the complexity of our sin and death, able to lead us to a path toward redemption.

Each one of us here today is part of this Easter story. Each one of us a witness of Christ in our lives by the way we live, work, and relate to the world and creation. Each recognizing our shortcomings but also recognizing that in Christ we are children of God.

Within the uncertainty of today's world, as we experience the turmoil of what we see in the news, as we ponder our story of what is next, we are called to remember God is still working, through history and through us. This is not the first time the world has been at war, when people struggle, when leaders are crazy. God has seen this all before, and he continues to be with us through it all.

I was called to remember this week during our Bible study that these first disciples, these first witnesses to Jesus, were just a group of rag tag fishermen, not philosophers and certainly not the educated or temple elite. God has no hierarchy or requirements in sharing his story and work in the world.

Whenever you wonder where the world is going, or whatever your part is in it, remember you are part of the resurrection story. And if you open your heart and mind, Jesus will be there. As our Collect today allows us to pray:  
***Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work.***

I hope you continue this Eastertide finding Jesus in your heart and seeing the overstretching patterns of God within your own life, leaving your hearts burning and your lives as witness. Amen