

Grace and peace to you my friends and fellow sojourners, God in Jesus is risen.

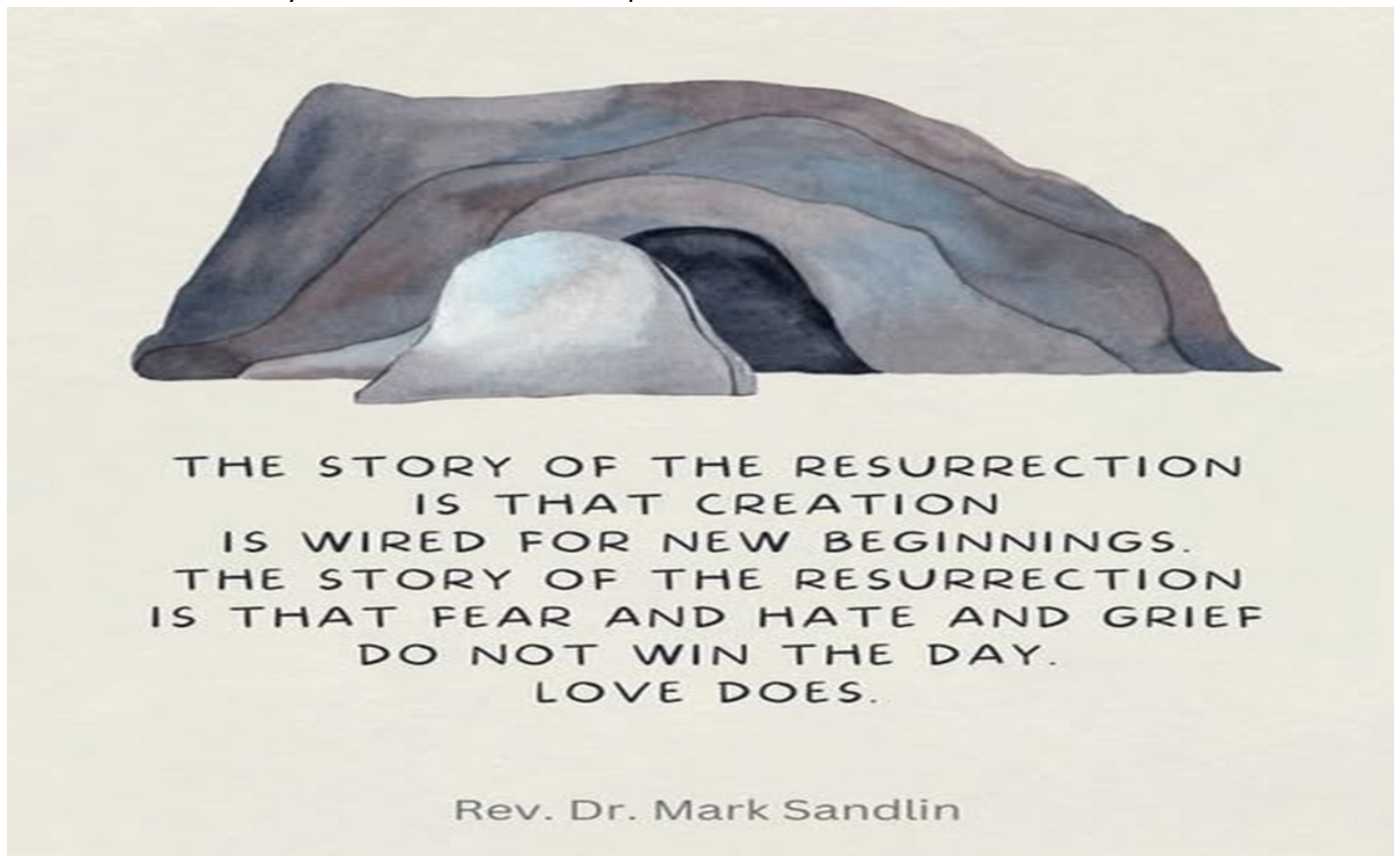
Sometimes, even I will sometimes use great church songs even though I think they have some bad theology. Given that auspicious introduction, anyone care to guess as to what bad theology I am referencing in one, or more, of our songs today? The first thing that comes to my mind is the images of battle. Now, I absolutely love our first hymn we sang today. We actually have to borrow it from the United Methodist hymnal and I love the transition from the more somber verses to the energized chorus, but the chorus also has language about triumph and victory that can be construed in a conquering, military light. Depending on one's perspective, this could be interpreted as fighting language. Then triumphant and triumph appear again in each of our next two hymns underscoring the same perspective concern. But let us not continue to mince words, during communion we will sing about battle, strife, triumph, and victory. But - my friends, when we want to be or feel combative, let us remember the actions and words of Jesus. Even though many Christians think so, I do not believe Jesus was ever combative in Jesus' discourses with multiple authorities. Strong language – yes, combative -no. For example, the Greek word *ekballo* is typically translated into English as drove although it really means “to cast out” or “to drive out”. The degree of force used is up to one's interpretation or perspective. Did you know that same Greek word is used for both the Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness and Jesus driving the animals and maybe people out of the Temple during Holy Week. I think of the force in these stories as more like an Australian Sheperd dog that nips at the heels.

I like to think my perspective on this is backed up in our reading on Good Friday, where we had the passion story from the Gospel of John and Jesus says in verse 36: **“My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”** Yet, we live in a world where so many Christians believe we are in a fight for our souls and the world. Why? Have we Christians made the same assumption that the Israelites did? God, Jesus, the Messiah is all about being a triumphant and victorious winning conqueror over the evil in this world. I believe the biblical record is clear, my friends, that is not how or what Jesus as the Messiah was 2000 years ago, and I do not believe that is what God, Jesus are about **now**, today either. Is it possible for us to learn what the Israelites did not? God – I hope and pray so.

The second thing of importance on this day, especially considering our readings today, is not to blame the Israelites, the Jews. Societies are always fractured. The degrees or depths of divide are constantly changing as are the reasons for various divides. This was true in first century Rome and Palestine just as it is in 21st century America. Assigning blame to all Jews for the actions of some Jews is like blaming all Americans for the actions of some Americans. What is important here is the activity and plan of God carried out by Jesus as the living and dying and living again sign of God's grace, love, and mercy. How different our world would be if we could but live and love as Jesus lived and expected and taught us to live as well, caring for each other as we care for ourselves. Martin Luther, in his large and small catechisms, takes each of what we call the Ten Commandments and enlarges the intent of each of those sayings. For example, do not kill does not mean just do not kill but also that it is our responsibility to also provide for others that which can prevent their demise. To provide food for the hungry so that they do not starve to death. To provide clothing and housing for the unclothed and unhoused so that they do not die from exposure to the elements. This same concept applies in this modern world of ours to basic essential healthcare.

Did you notice who was at the tomb? Yep, the women. First question where were the men? Well, if later accounts hold true for the whole day, then they were in a room behind locked doors. Men tend to be macho and women tend to be fearless, well maybe not about bugs, but we do know that macho and fearless are not the same. Women tend also to be more pure less corrupted by our societies. I think this is because women are closer to children and children are truly pure until we adults corrupt them.

Now women at the tomb first is, I think, very important, but the most important thing at the tomb that morning and every morning was that God, Jesus was alive again. If you think in terms of the Trinity, the inseparable yet diverse parts of God, then this biblical story is really about God coming to be with and live like us and then dying like us in a horrible way. But God's story, and ours by the way, does not end there because God reaches deep into the tomb and death and brings God's self-back to life again just like God will do for us if we just believe God can and will do that for us. Do you believe that? Do you know that all creation tells this story over and over. I saw this picture on Facebook:



Homily - April 5, 2026

The story of seeds, leaves and trees, sun and moon and stars, the beautiful green on the Pali hillside, is that creation renews daily, that rebirth and renewal are not only God's plan but also God's design. Have no fear little ones because God holds you in God's hands.

Hear then the good news:

God, Jesus are risen. Believe it.

God's is continually **seeking** to make us children of God, heirs of the kingdom.

You are God's.

Jesus is risen.

You, we will rise again also.

It is God's design, God's plan.

Grace and peace to you my friends, this week – do not be afraid, believe in the resurrection and then offer resurrection daily to those around you.

Amen