

FOOTPRINTS

The monthly newsletter of

Followers of Christ Lutheran Church

A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Dear Followers of Christ,

It's been an unusual Lent, with Ash Wednesday falling on Valentine's Day, February 14th. And now Easter will fall on April Fools' Day, April 1st. What's going on here?

If we refer to the Easter story for Sunday, April 1st, we'll see that it comes from the Gospel of Mark. According to the story, the women who went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' dead body are afraid of what they find there. The stone has been rolled away; a young man dressed in a white robe is inside the tomb instead. He is clearly not Jesus. The young man has a message for the women: "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you" (Mark 16:6-7NRSV).

Evidently, nothing could have prepared the women for what they found at the tomb that day. The body of their Lord gone; a white-robed man there instead; a message that Jesus had been raised and had gone ahead of them to Galilee where they will see him. This was either the greatest April Fools in the world or was the complete and honest truth.

It was the truth, of course. Jesus had been raised from the dead. But at that particular moment it was a truth that was more than those particular followers of Jesus could bear. They came, after all, to the tomb with spices, expecting to anoint a dead body. But "they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8NRSV).

They were afraid.

“Now what?” they wondered, in terror and amazement. They were expecting to anoint the dead body of the man they thought was their Lord. On their way to the tomb, all they had were their memories of his death by crucifixion and the life he had lived prior. But now at the tomb they could see for themselves that Jesus’ body wasn’t there, and a stranger was telling them that Jesus had been raised and would meet them in Galilee. If he was indeed alive, why would the living Jesus possibly want anything to do with them now? They were afraid.

On the one hand, there are our Easter flowers, decorations, music, and shouts of “Alleluia, he is risen!” celebrating that Jesus has conquered sin and death for our sake. This is indescribably good news!

On the other hand, like the women who went to the tomb first, there is fear too. If Jesus has been raised and is alive, which he is, then why would the living Jesus possibly want anything to do with us now? If the risen Christ is no April Fools’ joke, no distant memory of the past, but a living reality in our lives today, then now what?

When we gather around God’s Word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion each Sunday, the living Christ is right there with us, as he promises to be. We need his Word and Supper to fill us, precisely at those moments when we’re afraid to follow him and doubt whether he’s with us.

Sundays during the month of April will also have a Stewardship focus. Stewardship, as we’ll see, is not all about the amount we put in the offering plate in order to pay the bills and meet the budget. Rather, stewardship is what our faith looks like. It’s how we live – a grateful and generous response on our part to all that the living Christ has shared with us. Throughout the month of April on Sunday mornings, we’ll watch videos entitled, “Stories of Stewardship.” The videos will show ways that Christians are responding to God’s generosity in their own lives. We’ll talk about what those stories mean to us during Sunday School. And we’ll even learn to make some videos of our own, so that we can see how the love of Jesus is already at work in and through Followers of Christ.

May the living Christ transform our fear into faith, and our despair into hope, as we worship throughout this Easter season and grow in Stewardship together.

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Pastor Brad