

Second Sunday of Easter: Year B: 7/8 April 2018

Patricia Kay Jue, lay preacher

## **Testify: look of G-d, and tell your story<sup>1</sup>**

Evening and Morning Prayer service

Psalm 133

Lesson 1 : Acts 4:32-35

Lesson 2; 1 John 1:1-2:2

Lesson 3; John 20:19-31

Last week was Holy Week. A fortnight ago, our Rector, Fr. Gary, blessed palms

For Sunday: We walked around outside and we rang bells.

We told of Christ triumphant, entering the gates of Jerusalem. We testified that Jesus is to be praised. On Thursday, many of us (or at least those of us who braved driving at night) had a Mediterranean meal – eaten with fingers– no forks, knives, spoons. Fr. Gary consecrated flat bread, and “Kosher for Passover” wine. In the same way that Jesus’ disciplines did, more than 2000 years ago, we ate blessed bread and wine with our meal, and then solemnly gathered in the dark, where all the material things we use to remind of us G-d on Earth were removed: no more fine cloth, no more candles, no more light...only the harsh reality of the cool, dark tomb. We re-lived the story.

A few of us came back on Good Friday to once again hear the story: of how Jesus was arrested, how he was mocked by Harrold, how his closest friends – even his beloved discipline – ran away. (They denied knowing him.) Of how our Lord, the one called a King – the hoped for Messiah—was executed—nailed and left to die upon a cross.

But we returned, there was a great fire, the Paschal candle was lit, all was light and joyful: for the Light has Returned. Our Lord, our Messiah, the Chosen one who Redeems the World, is not dead but Risen: RISEN and lives again. We testify that the Lord is Risen Indeed ! Alleluia! Glory Alleluia. What a great thing! What a great story! What a beautiful exciting end!

That was a whole week ago. So why are you here today? The story has been told. There is no more to tell.

What brings you back to St. James, for this service? And each week? Is it “habit”? Something you always do each Saturday / Sunday? Is it “duty”? Did some a family member “convinced” you to come?

Sat: Or did some training from long ago  
become so ingrained that now you feel  
guilty if you do not come to service....  
Even if life is very busy?  
And the snow keeps coming?  
How about this?

Sun: Or maybe it is the music. After all, in  
many Episcopal churches, this one  
included, everyone who can, sings the  
hymns, often breaking out into alto, tenor,  
descant and the occasional bass. And  
then there is our wonderful choir, with  
their beautiful anthems. But, as the choir  
members know, and Richard, our  
Minister of Music reminds us, hymns and  
anthems should not be viewed as  
performance art. They are worship,  
praises of and to G-d... So then maybe  
that is it. We are here for worship.

Something in our lives has reminded us of the Majesty of G-d: **G-d**, from whom all things come.

Think back on your week. Where did you see G-d? What thing, what object, what incident reminded you of G-d this week? Objects, images, pictures ...those things that come to ones' mind...The thing that holds one's heart: the touchstone, which allows us to recall the time ....the event....the story.

Think of Mary, the Mary who followed Jesus. Maybe for Mary, it would have been an alabaster jar of oil. Remember Mary? She broke open an alabaster jar to pour perfumed oil upon the feet of Jesus: Mary, the one who on the third day takes another jar of oil to anoint Jesus's body. Mary, who goes to the tomb in which they lay Jesus, expecting a great obstacle – the great stone that was used to seal the tomb— only to find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. The alabaster jar, dropped, broken, oil pouring out...as Mary runs to tell the others that their Lord has risen.

Maybe it is like some tired fisherman, their nets empty after a long night on the water. They hear someone on the shore telling them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. And when they do, their nets are filled with fish. **And they remember** Jesus telling them “Lay down your nets, for I will make you fishers of men.”

Maybe like a group of friends, gathered in an upper room, uncertain what to do. Then a stranger comes, bids them peace, takes the bread and blesses it. **And they remember:** Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and broke it. And their eyes were open and they recognized their risen Lord.

A jar of oil, the fishing net, bread broken. All images reminding us of G-d, being present in this world. Making G-d known to G-d’s people. G-d sightings....G-d present then, and here, now, among us...

Some of you have shared images of G-d’s presence in your lives: **Your G-d sightings...**Let me share some of them with you...

(slide show; see <http://stjamesclinton.org/god-sightings>)

Each of these images, these G-d sightings, hold a story. Each represents a person testifying, telling of G-d in their lives. The story behind each of these images is a personal thing, unique to that person. And yet, by sharing these images, these stories, with each other, the images and stories become a part of each of us. They become part of the life and memory of the community. So, go, tell, share, testify. For as John wrote:

“.. Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of G-d, and that through believing you may have life in his name.<sup>2</sup>

### **G-d is with you.**

In the words of Tim Schenck, rector of the Episcopal Parish of St James the Evangelist, Hingham, Massachusetts and developer of Lenten Madness: <sup>3</sup>

“Whatever is happening in your own life — a medical issue, the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, deep depression, feelings of unworthiness, unchecked sin — know that you are not alone. The G-d who has experienced the very worst of the human condition is with you. Loving you, tending to you, comforting you. These cycles of our lives don’t always fit neatly into the calendar. Life is a constant adjustment. But you are not alone...We are not alone. And that is the good news, the joyous news, of Easter ....”

So as you go forward into this week, look for G-d, alive, working, present in your life”

“For I know that our Redeemer liveth

Christ is Risen. Alleluia ! **Alleluia!**”

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<sup>1</sup> Following chumrah, this sermon writer uses G-d for the written name.

<sup>2</sup> John 20: 31 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> “In Good Faith: Not according to plan” By The Rev. Tim Schenck, posted April 4, 2018 in **Clergy Confidential: Finding God in Daily Chaos** at <http://www.clergyconfidential.com/2018/04/in-good-faith-not-according-to-plan.html>