

04/21/2019 ~ Resurrection of the Christ ~ Easter Day ~ \*Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8. Used: 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 [ILV], John 20:1-18.

### *Trusting Truth*

“These words seemed to those who listened to be an idle tale, nonsensical, and they refused to believe. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Upon getting there this apostle stooped and looked in but could see nothing but the linen cloths, the wrappings, on the ground.” — Luke 24:11-12.

If nothing else, he was... methodical. If nothing else, he was... careful. If nothing else, he looked at every piece of evidence available and... examined it.

Peter simply sought truth. That was Peter, all right— methodical, careful, seeker of truth.

And so Peter’s tendency was to listen. Peter listened with care. Peter examined everything these women said.

And Peter knew these women well. They had been through a lot together.

They had traveled with the Rabbi all over the Roman Province of Judea. Indeed, they were there, together, when the Rabbi spoke to a large crowd on a plain, when the Rabbi spoke about the poor, the hungry, the excluded being blessed.

They were there, together, when the Rabbi spoke about loving one’s enemies, not being judgmental, about forgiveness, there when that large crowd got fed. They were there, together, when a healing happened to the Centurion’s daughter— the Centurion’s daughter— a Gentile woman!

They were there, together, when the Rabbi spoke about not hiding light, spoke about letting light shine. Indeed, it seemed to all of them the Rabbi often spoke about light, never about night.

And yet... and yet... they were all there that short time ago when night seemed to envelop them. They were all there when the Rabbi was executed, an enemy of the State, murdered by the State, murdered by... Rome.

And so Peter, by the nature of that relationship, that common experience, that bond with these women, trusted them as tellers of the truth. Peter trusted what these women said

about that morning— that they had gone to the tomb— trusted what they said they found there, trusted that as... truth. But that was *also* when Peter decided *he had* to go to the tomb.

After all, Peter was Peter. Peter needed to look at every piece of evidence available and... examine. Peter had to seek... truth.

So alone, he set off to the tomb and ran part of the way. But he was no longer twenty. After a bit, the pace got slower.

In an odd way Peter was grateful for that. The time walking allowed him to once again think about what he had heard, what he had experienced. Peter remembered the time the Rabbi sent out the seventy with nothing, no purse, no bag, no sandals.

They returned filled with joy. The Rabbi said the Spirit of God had been with them. Peter realized what the Rabbi was teaching them: trust God above all else.

And then... and then... Peter remembered that time John and James and Peter all accompanied the Rabbi, went up the mountain to pray. And they prayed.

And all of them, together, had a vision. Peter remembered there was light. Peter remember feeling a sense of peace.

Peter remembered he felt the presence of God, the embrace of God, the arms of God surround him. But what did that vision, that light, that sense of peace, that presence, that embrace, say about the Rabbi, say about God? (Slight pause.)

Peter reached the tomb and reminded himself to be methodical, careful. This apostle stooped and looked in. (Slight pause.)

There was nothing to see except exactly what the women had said would be seen— linen cloths, wrappings, on the ground. (Slight pause.) Peter stood up, took a breath, then another.

Despite being alone, out loud he asked, “What do I really know? What are the facts?” Peter was Peter.

Peter *had* seen the blood of the Rabbi. It was real. Peter knew his friend, the Rabbi, *had been* executed. Peter took yet another a deep breath and sat on a nearby stone.

*Of course*, Peter knew the Rabbi spoke about the poor, the hungry, the excluded being blessed, about loving one's enemies, about not being judgmental, about forgiveness, about light, about the Spirit of God. But Peter also knew the Rabbi taught them over and over and over again to trust God.

Perhaps Peter was unnerved by the reality of it all, the memories of time spent with the Rabbi, the reality of the execution, the reality of an empty tomb. His body began to quake. Peter sobbed.

Tears streamed down his face, his beard. He wept and wept and wept, his head in his hands. (Long pause.) Suddenly Peter knew, experienced, an overwhelming sense of peace of God, the presence of God, the embrace of God, the arms of God. Peter knew the Rabbi, Jesus, was there with him. Peter felt someone touch him, tap him on the shoulder.

Peter opened his eyes and looked up. There was no one near him, touching him. Peter stopped weeping, wiped the tears away. He had realized something he knew all along.

Peter realized that over and over and over again this Rabbi, this Jesus offered a singular message. Trust God— trust that the peace of God, the presence of God, is with us always. Trust that God walks with us, no matter what.

Peter realized this is precisely what the Rabbi, this Jesus had done— trust God. Even when being murdered by the State, murdered by Rome the Rabbi, this Jesus trusted God.

(Slight pause.) Peter— Peter who was methodical, careful, Peter who constantly examined things, Peter who sought the truth— Peter realized trust in God mattered. Peter realized trusting God *means* seeking truth— God's truth.

And what is God's truth? Peter knew what Jesus taught. Jesus taught God's truth consists of peace, justice, hope, light, freedom, joy, love.

Peter realized this Rabbi, this Jesus, embodied the truth of God. Peter realized the truth of God and only the truth of God reflects this reality.

It was at that point Peter— methodical, careful, Peter, Peter who always sought truth, knew there was only one course to follow... trust— simply trust God. And after all, Peter knew, Peter could feel the presence of Christ, there next to him, there, as he sat on that rock.

And Peter did trust this truth: Jesus was not in the tomb. Jesus was present, alive,

resurrected. Christ had risen. (Slight pause.) Amen.

04/21/2019 - Easter Sunday -10:00 A.M. Service

United Church of Christ, First Congregational, Norwich, New York

ENDPIECE: It is the practice of the Pastor to speak after the Closing Hymn, but before the Choral Response and Benediction. This is an précis of what was said: “I need to say two things: first, in Aramaic, which would have been spoken in Roman Judea in New Testament times, to be saved meant to be made alive. Second, I want to suggest to merely say ‘Happy Easter’ is not a Christian sentiment. So, let me make a suggestion: if someone walks up to you today and says, ‘Happy Easter’ smile and say, ‘Christ is risen.’ ‘Christ is risen’ is the Christian sentiment.”

BENEDICTION: Hear now this blessing and then please join with me in the responsive Easter acclamation found in the bulletin— May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the love of Christ, Jesus, and in the knowledge of the Holy Spirit this day and forever.

And please join with me in the Easter Acclamation.

ONE: Rejoice, people of God! Christ is risen from the dead! Go in peace to love and serve God. Christ is with you always. Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

MANY: Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!