

Scriptures and Readings on Resurrection Compiled by Susanne Guenther Loewen, NPMC - April 24, 2022

Psalm Reading – Ps. 118:14-29 (light print: HEDIE; dark print: congregation)

The LORD is my strength and my might;
[God] has become my salvation.

¹⁵ **There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:**

“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;

¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”

¹⁷ **I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.**

¹⁸ The LORD has punished me severely,
but [God] did not give me over to death.

¹⁹ **Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.**

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ **I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.**

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ **This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.**

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and [God] has given us light.

**Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.**

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

²⁹ *[[O give thanks to the LORD, for [God] is good,
for [God’s] steadfast love endures forever]].*

SUSANNE: Introduction

Though Easter Sunday itself has passed, we sometimes forget that Easter is a season, stretching 50 days up until Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the early church. This is the season in which to celebrate and ponder the meaning of resurrection. Jesus was not only raised on that early Easter morning, but appeared mysteriously to his disciples and friends over the weeks that followed. Our modern minds may not quite know what to do with these miraculous appearances – but then again, neither did the disciples! They had all kinds of perplexed and confused reactions, mixtures of joy and doubt, terror and grief. Some mistook him for the gardener, or thought he was a ghost when he appeared in a locked room. Some recognized him only after he was gone, realizing that their hearts had burned within them while they spoke with him.

I see these passages of Jesus' resurrection appearances as invitations to dwell in the mystery of resurrection, and to join the disciples in their – often gradual and halting – realization of what was unfolding before them and among them. Let us join, in particular, Mary Magdalene, as she weeps for Jesus in the garden only to have him appear to comfort her himself and call her by name. Let us join Thomas, who refuses to believe in this message of resurrection unless he sees Jesus in the flesh, mortal wounds and all. Let us join in contemplating what this power of resurrection means to us today, the new life it offers us as we “walk in the resurrection,” as the early Anabaptists put it.¹ Let's join the Risen Jesus on the road toward God's healing and wholeness that are, slowly but surely, transforming all of creation.

ERIC: John 20:1-18 (NRSV):

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me

¹ See “Resurrection,” in the *Global Anabaptist-Mennonite Encyclopedia, Online*, <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Resurrection>

where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

HEDIE:

THE MAGDALENE’S BLESSING – By Jan Richardson

You hardly imagined
standing here,
everything you ever loved
suddenly returned to you,
looking you in the eye
and calling your name.
And now
you do not know
how to abide this hole
in the center
of your chest,
where a door
slams shut
and swings open
at the same time,
turning on the hinge
of your aching
and hopeful heart.
I tell you,
this is not a banishment
from the garden.
This is an invitation,
a choice,
a threshold,
a gate.
This is your life
calling to you
from a place
you could never
have dreamed,
but now that you
have glimpsed its edge,
you cannot imagine
choosing any other way.
So let the tears come

as anointing,
as consecration,
and then
let them go.
Let this blessing
gather itself around you.
Let it give you
what you will need
for this journey.
You will not remember
the words—
they do not matter.
All you need to remember
is how it sounded
when you stood
in the place of death
and heard the living
call your name.

ERIC: John 20:19-29 (NRSV):

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jew[ish leaders], Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

HEDIE: The Illuminated Wound – by Jan Richardson

“Have you believed because you have seen me?” Jesus asks Thomas as he, at Jesus’ invitation, reaches his hand into the wounds of the risen Christ. “Blessed are those,” Jesus goes on to say, “who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” ...

Thomas would have found good company amongst many Christians in the Middle Ages, when there arose a form of devotion that gave particular attention to the wounds of Christ as an entry into prayer and contemplation. The writings of medieval mystics both helped give rise to this form of devotion as well as to articulate it. With an approach to both flesh and spirit that can be challenging for us to comprehend in our day, these mystics saw in Christ’s wounds, particularly the wound in his side, an array of meanings. In their prayerful imagining, Christ’s wound became, among other things, an opening through which he offers his life-giving sustenance as a mother shares her milk with her child; a womb-space that offers the possibility of rebirth...

This kind of depiction of Jesus’ wound sometimes appears in illuminated prayer scrolls that were used by women in childbirth. The women placed the prayer scrolls around themselves as birth girdles, with the depiction of Christ’s wound serving not only as an object of contemplation but of hoped-for protection as well. One can imagine the laboring women saw this wound-symbol as a confirmation that Jesus, who knew what it meant to suffer in bringing new life, offered sustenance to them as they did so.

Christ beckons us not to seek out our wounding, because that will come readily enough in living humanly in the world, but rather to allow our wounds to draw us together for healing within and beyond the body of Christ, and for an end to the daily crucifixions that happen through all forms of violence. The crucified Christ challenges us to discern how our wounds will serve as doorways that lead us through our own pain and into a deeper relationship with the wounded world and with the Christ who is about the business of resurrection, for whom the wounds did not have the final word.²

ERIC: The Disabled God by Nancy Eiesland³

At the resurrection, the disciples understood the person Jesus for who he really was. ... In the resurrected Jesus Christ, they saw not the suffering servant for whom the last and most important word was tragedy and sin, but the disabled God who embodied both impaired hands and feet and pierced side and the *imago Dei* [the image of God]. Paradoxically, in the very act commonly understood as the transcendence of the physical life, God is revealed as tangible, bearing the representation of the body reshaped by injustice and sin into the fullness of the Godhead. Luke 24:36-39 relates an appearance of this resurrected Jesus:

² Jan Richardson, “The Illuminated Wound,” <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2011/04/24/easter-2-the-illuminated-wound/>

³ Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberator Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 99-100.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them....They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, why are you looking frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

Here is the resurrected Christ making good on the incarnational proclamation that God would be with us, embodied as we are, incorporating the fullness of human contingency and ordinary life into God. In presenting his impaired hands and feet to his started friends, the resurrected Jesus is revealed as the disabled God.

HEDIE: “Cross and Resurrection” by Dorothee Soelle⁴

Belief in the Resurrection roots us in ancient history and in our own history. Easter does not celebrate a departure into a post-history which has finally been attained, something following historical suffering. It celebrates history itself, this emergence from not being free. Without the early history recounted in the Hebrew Bible, the departure of the children of Israel from the house of slavery in Egypt, one cannot understand the departure of Jesus from the house of the dead. ... The Resurrection cannot be discussed in isolation, as if it had nothing to do with the cross. ... Jesus believed above all – and for all – in a life *before* death. The Resurrection, this spark of life, was already in him. And only because of this God-in-him were they unable to kill him. It simply did not function. Even today the powerful do not succeed in extinguishing this love of justice, this sustained interest in the ‘last.’ ... [So the proper] question reads: ‘Is Jesus dead, or is he still alive? Does he change people’s lives? Can one still say, ‘Jesus lives, and in him I live also’?’”

SUSANNE: Celtic Blessing:

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet
walk with you on the road.

May the Christ who serves with wounded hands
stretch out your hands to serve.

May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart
open your hearts to love.

May you see the face of Christ
in everyone you meet,
and may everyone you meet
see the face of Christ in you. **Amen**

⁴ Dorothee Soelle, *Theology for Skeptics: Reflections on God*, trans. Joyce L. Irwin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 105, 107.