



A Message for Easter Sunday

Surrender and Victory

Our Scripture Reference for Today: Colossians 3:1-4

“Now that you have been resurrected with Jesus Christ, seek the things that are above, where Jesus is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, and not on things that are on earth. For your old life has died, and your new life is with Christ in God.”

Alleluia Saints...Alleluia and Happy Easter! It is most excellent to be with you again, Blessed Ones, here at All Saints, Vancouver on this joyous Easter Morning. On behalf of Mona and myself, our Worship Team here with us and also our amazing guest musicians, we welcome you in a good way and thank you for inviting us into your homes and workspaces and for taking the time to worship together today.

Saints it is amazing to think that this Easter Sunday's worship is actually our second virtual Easter worship together...Virtual Easter 2.0, here at All Saints. Last week I was chatting with a community member who remarked, somewhat sadly, that this was going to be “our second Easter apart.” And their words reminded me that truly we have not been apart at all. We have been together as a Community of Faith through this entire pandemic, this time of trial. We have been together in our homes, our workspaces, on our phones and computers, on Facetime and Facebook, Zoom and Microsoft teams. There have been more of us gathered together than ever before. In different places, spaces, time zones and even different countries. We have indeed not been apart but have discovered new, different, exciting and creative ways to be together. Together more, some say together better. We have been transformed as a community. Out of the darkness and death of this pandemic, a new life, a renewed Community of Faith has emerged. Been birthed, and like a

newborn colt has found it purchase and footing; began to run and has never looked back. We are “transformed.”

Also, Saints, I am blessed beyond measure to be surrounded and sustained by so many profoundly inspirational people and teams here in our All Saints Community of Faith. I have seen, up close and personally, the clarity, the spiritual, devotional and liturgical energy that can be created and sustained when Spirit is invited into a collaborative sacred space of openness and welcoming. And this week especially, I want to thank Carolyn Maloney and the Reverend Roxanne Whitelight for their beautiful and inspirational insights. Through their wisdom, I have been transformed. And so, Blessed Ones, the title of today’s Easter Message is “Surrender and Victory.”

Saints, you may be surprised to hear that as a Church we have been using the wrong words all along when speaking about Easter. We use the words, “death and resurrection” when speaking about Jesus’ successful resolution of his Vision Quest. Death and resurrection... a distinct end and a distinct beginning. Linear thinking. It makes perfect sense that our Church and our theologians would speak this way, because that is the way so many of them, and us, think. Something ends, something else begins. But all through this Lenten Season, Saints, if you have been listening, you have heard us speak about another way of thinking... a circular, seamless, a more Indigenous way of thinking. Not a stop and start but a continuous transition; a seamless **“transformation”** taking place right before us and in us, through the Jesus Way Journey of Lent and now Easter. Jesus transformed right before our eyes and, in today’s Gospel, right before the eyes of Beloved Ones. What was it that allowed this spectacular and miraculous transformation to occur? Was it inevitable that Jesus was to be Resurrected? Was this just God’s Plan and that is that? Some theologians say Yes, this particular conclusion of Jesus’ life was simply “part of God’s plan.” The Jesus Train was on a specific track and the last two stops on the line were death and resurrection. Two stops. No spurs or switches in between. God’s Plan.

I’ve asked myself this very same question for a long time. Was Jesus’ resurrection just meant to be? Or was there something else at work here, something more circular in Jesus’ transformation? Perhaps something more familiar... more human. Well I finally got an answer that works for me, makes perfect sense for me, seamlessly and gracefully completes the circle of the transformation from a first century itinerant apocalyptic preacher, teacher and social revolutionary... Jesus, to

The Christ... the one who, in the words of both the Nicene and Apostles Creed and today's reading of Paul to the Colossians, "sits at the right hand of the Father." What was the catalyst for this most sacred of transformations...on that very Good Friday, and Easter Sunday so long ago?

Reverend Roxanne cleared things up for me last Monday. We were talking about the intricacies and challenges of languages and especially translating accurately from one language into another. How language is laced through and through with culture and nuance and colloquial forms of expression. Language is like a beautiful piece of Japanese Kobe steak...a prefect interlacing of meat and fat...intertwined and intimate. It is impossible to separate the meat from the fat and still retain the character, flavor and nuance of the original. Language is much the same as that Kobe steak. When we try to separate the words from the culture and colloquial nuance, accuracy and the purity of the message is most always compromised. And so, in the Scriptures, we have Jesus' Aramaic, translated into Hebrew, translated into Latin, and ultimately translated into English. I am continually amazed that any of the Scriptures make sense. So what Reverend Roxanne was telling me is that we have to return the original Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, to get the whole and correct message, to finally taste the Kobe steak as it was meant to be savored.

It is on the Cross... with some of Jesus' last words, that our Aramaic scholars and linguists open the door of learning and wisdom and we ultimately can understand the catalyst of Jesus' glorious transformation from Jesus to Christ. In the classic translations of Jesus last words, we have Jesus calling out to God in this way, "Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing." But our Aramaic scholars say, "close but not exactly correct." A more precise, Aramaic translation has Jesus saying, "Father, help me forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing." Jesus is not passing the forgiveness "buck" here onto God. Jesus knows that, this forgiveness is His decision and His alone to make. Jesus knows that in order for his Vision Quest to be complete, for His journey from Jesus to Christ to be successfully concluded, Jesus must find a way to "let it all go..." to surrender every last bit of his humanity, his old self, his previous way of being, over to God. Even to the point of forgiving those who have committed this most horrible atrocity of the Crucifixion. Jesus' resurrection cannot take place until this last piece of the forgiveness puzzle is in place. This last forgiveness card of the Jesus Way hand is played. Jesus must find a way to forgive the unforgiveable, to bear the unbearable. Jesus realizes that the only way to ensure complete victory is with unconditional surrender. "Father, help me forgive them, for they do not know

what they are doing.” Father, I am indeed the “broken pot shard,” the pierced vessel of the Prophets, help me to make this last decision rightly, I am yours completely. And then Jesus’ final prayer is answered...quietly, humbly, totally, silently. We do not hear the answer, but we know that it has come. Jesus has found a way, with and through God, to somehow let it all go, to bear the unbearable, to forgive the unforgiveable...with His final words, “It is finished.” And so, with utter and complete surrender, Jesus has found complete and ultimate victory for Him and for us. Jesus’ **transformation** from Jesus to Christ is now possible...the “right hand of the Father” awaits. Jesus Vision Quest completed not with a bloody cross, but with an empty tomb.

And there, I believe, is the Spirit’s message for us Saints on this beautiful Easter morning. Our personal, spiritual transformations, the conclusion of our respective Vision Quests is possible now. Today, we can fully acknowledge and participate in that spark of the divine that resides in us. We have said that, “We are born in the image and likeness of our God.” Today, we can believe it. We say, “We are created carrying that Divine Spark of the Blessed One.” Today, we can believe it. Like Jesus, all Lent we have been on our personal Vision Quests... finding our purpose, finding our joy. Our divine journey of transformation, our coming home to Our God. The transformation from humanness into holiness. Why can we believe it? Because our beloved Jesus, our Teacher has shown us how to do it. Proved to us that it indeed, can be done. The Transformation of Resurrection is possible for us all. Jesus has shown us the secret...the last puzzle piece.

And that remaining puzzle piece, that last missing piece of wisdom is the knowing that we can’t make this spirit journey by ourselves. Jesus reaches out to God in prayer to help him make that final, remaining decision that needs to be resolved before Jesus can move on. “Father Help me forgive them...” **To forgive. To Forgive. To Forgive.** Unconditionally and totally. This is the complete surrender that leads to complete victory, the complete surrender that leads to our God. And in this total capitulation and surrender to our God, Saints, we are not weak, we are strong. We are not lost, Saints we are found. We shed the dark bits of our humanity like a snake sheds it’s skin. In our forgiveness we are made new, by our forgiveness the broken pieces in us becomes whole again. Today, like our beloved Jesus...In our surrender we are resurrected. In our resurrection we are transformed. In our transformation we are victorious. In our victory we are ready to take our place at the right hand of our God. Alleluia, and a Blessed Easter to you all. Amen.