

**The Rev. Dr. Hilary B. Smith**

**Holy Comforter**

**Richmond, VA**

**April 5, 2015; Easter Sunday**

**Readings:** Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; Mark 16:1-8.

## **The Look of Resurrection**

Aleluia! Christ is Risen!

*The Lord is risen, indeed! Aleluia!*

Death is conquered; we are free; Christ has won the victory.

We proclaim this day and every Easter Day that Christ is risen!

In fact, we celebrate this foundation of our faith every Sunday,  
and then we seek to live it, every day of the week.

What does it mean to live Easter or Resurrection every day of the week?

Well, it means that in the specific circumstances of your life, my life, our  
lives, we have hope and companionship with God...in all things, at  
all times.

And then our hope and companionship with God, enable us to act in ways  
that make Resurrection, new life, God's reign, visible to others.

We share in the power of Christ's Resurrection.

Companionship with God, at all times, imagine that!

Can you think of an image for that, which touches your heart?

Once when I was praying about wanting to know God's companionship,  
20 or so golden lab puppies came bounding into my prayer wanting  
to be with me.

Resurrection can look like many different things...and God seeks to touch  
us where we live.

Resurrection looks like what happens here the first Sunday of every

month, when we bring up offerings of food to the Altar to be give to our food pantry visitors, as we will do today.

This is the look of Resurrection.

To the women who went to Jesus' tomb after the sabbath, so that they could anoint the body of Jesus, Resurrection did not look anything like what one might expect, according to Mark's account.

Jesus isn't there, not the body, not the resurrected Christ, not there, just some angelic type in white giving them instruction on how to continue to live as followers of Jesus.

They were not expecting that.

We might imagine that those women were trying to come to terms with life without Jesus, and then they learn that the story is not over...but that they are now responsible for its continuation.

That's a lot to take in, and they are amazed and terrified.

No, Resurrection wasn't looking anything like what one might expect.

In fact, the Gospel of Mark ended in such an

unsatisfying way to many at the time that someone added on to Mark, to make it more what one would hope for from

Resurrection...Jesus right there, on the spot, appearing to his friends, so to inspire them to action.

But, no, Resurrection...not looking like what one would expect.

And maybe that is because those women, and the other friends of

Jesus--- who had already left town in fear for their safety and devastated with grief at the loss of their friend---those friends of Jesus would be the ones to make the Resurrection visible to the world by what they would do next.

The Resurrection of Jesus happened, though no one can tell you exactly

what that means.

Those who experienced the on-going life of Christ, made the Resurrection visible.

And they made it visible... this small group with a seemingly misguided and ill-fated devotion to Jesus...what was first known as the Way

...much to everyone's surprise, this new way of being God's people in the world did not die out, but lived on...and lives on now in and through us.

Those first followers of the Way of Jesus, knew the companionship of God, and it enabled them to live Resurrection, often in very difficult circumstances.

No one can tell you exactly what Resurrection is, but we can know the look of it.

Today we are baptizing William and Max.

According to the words of the prayer book, they are being baptized into Christ's death and Resurrection so that they may live in the power of his Resurrection.

We who are followers of the Way of Jesus live in the power of the Resurrection through the grace of God, and then we are able to make Christ's Resurrection known through our actions.

We are welcoming William and Max into the community of the Church and they become, immediately, important members of the Body of Christ.

They have always been important to God, of course, as are all people. Every person on the earth is a child of God, and precious to God, people of every faith and also those who claim no faith at all.

By the way, I was recently told in a group setting that I talk about everyone being a 'child of God' often.

I had not realized that, that I talk about it often, but here I am doing it again, so there you have it!

Why do I do it?

I suppose it means a lot to me in a personal and deep way, and also because it is important knowledge to have in a world that is not always so accepting or celebratory about who we are...

but God is...

God is always celebrating us...

We have come here today to celebrate God...

gone out of our way, in a sense,

made a plan,

gotten here.

This is what God is like, having been made in the image of God, we

reflect God to each other, and just as we can look around and see

each other today...God has shown up for us...and shows up

for us...everyday.

This is essential information for living life in both the challenging times and the good times.

We just concluded a study of Howard Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, written specifically to the African-American community of the 1930s and 1940s, but also applicable to others who have felt that their "backs were up against the wall."

Thurman wrote about the need to know who we are as God's

children...that the experience of our relatedness to God is essential

for following this way of Jesus....for acting out of love, rather than hate, in a world that often does not love us first.

Being baptized on Easter Day, the day of Resurrection, brings everything together.

For we see Resurrection when we see new life...in these young lives, still so new in the world, through their baptisms today, they begin their

new life in Christ, as part of the community of faith, and they become ministers of Resurrection in the world.

The way that they do that now, is by simply being exactly who they are as created by God...see them smile, see them look at you with love, and know something of God with us, of Resurrection in our midst.

In the words of the Baptismal Covenant that their parents and Godparents will claim for them today, and that we will all reaffirm, listen to the words of the promises that we make as Christians, and imagine how doing these actions while being the people God has created us to be...makes Resurrection visible.

As we baptize Max and William today, as you hear the words of the prayers surrounding this mystical experience, listen to God's word to you, know that you are loved in a deep and abiding way.

Know that you too are a child of God.  
You are a child of the Resurrection.  
Through you, the Resurrection of Jesus is made visible in the world.

On that first day of week, when the women went to the tomb, they were told of the Resurrection, but it did not look like anything, to them at that point.

The first day of the new creation looked a lot like the day before.  
But the world would never be the same again.

In the days ahead, experiences of the Risen Christ would give them courage and strength to continue to live as friends of Jesus.  
And through their lives, and the lives of generations of Christ followers to come,  
and now in our time, through our lives, when we seek to serve Christ in all persons, respect the dignity of every human being, continue in the

breaking of bread, and seek justice and peace among all  
people, Resurrection is known.

This is the look of Resurrection. Amen.