

A New Truth – Easter B

Hallelujah, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! As the Dinka say, in South Sudan, “Miete piou de jon de rot!” As the Russians say, wherever they are on an Easter Sunday morning, “Hreesto’s voskree’z” – Christ is risen – “Voeestee’no vozkreee’z” – is risen indeed! Welcome to church on this fine and glorious Easter morning. As the psalmist insists, “This is the day the Lord has acted, let us rejoice and be glad in it. For God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten child into the world to do whatever was necessary to appeal to humankind in the name of peace. Preaching wasn’t sufficient, even healing wasn’t sufficient. But overcoming death – now that made the joyful noise heard around the world, a sound that reverberates here in this place on this Easter morning and forevermore. As the women ran from the empty tomb to tell their friends, so we turn to one another and say, “Happy Easter!” As a wag once wrote of the origins of Jewish holidays, “They tried to kill us, they failed; let’s eat!”

“For you have been a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, the noise of enemies like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

“It will be said on that day, Lo, this is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. And the Moabites shall be trodden down in their place as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.”

What are these terrible storms and noisy enemies? We each of us have own list. Why, anything and everything that keeps us from lives of peace and joy. As Richard Rohr observes, “Christ crucified is all of the hidden, private, tragic pain of history made public and given over to God.” And what are these rich foods that Isaiah extols, these rich foods filled with marrow, and well-aged wines strained clear? “Christ resurrected is all of that private, ungrrieved, unnoted suffering received, loved and transformed by an all-caring God. How else could we have any kind of cosmic hope? How else could we not die of sadness for what humanity has done to itself and to one another?” We have seen the Moabites, and they are us. “Jesus is the blueprint, the plan, the pattern revealed in oone body and moment of history to reveal the meaning of all of history and each

of our lives. The cross is the emblem of what we do to one another and to God. The resurrection is the banner of what God does to us in return.”

“I have seen the Lord,” exclaims Mary. I believe, because I have seen the Lord. Therefore, we’re having a party. As Sam Cooke sang, “Cokes are in the icebox; popcorn’s on the table...” These sightings of Jesus by his followers change only one thing in the nature of our existence, but that one change changes everything. It’s said that all we really want is something to do, someone to love and something to look forward to. Jesus gives us everything we want by giving his all. Our earthly lives are God’s commodity, God’s currency. How many of them, how much of this precious substance is misspent in sadness, self-destruction and violence – each day’s news brings us stories of more. But today we know for certain that the power for goodness continues beyond earthly life. It is not gone from our hearts, even when things are out of our hands. Because Jesus was lifted up, so can we be also. We can become citizens of a different society, another culture from the one we have grown used to. Our response to God’s “Timshel,” “Thou mayest,” puts us in this realm. Our desire to be connected with something timeless is fulfilled in the living Christ. Our hearts now have a sense of connectedness and hope, our voices can now sing psalms that say, “We shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.” And oh yes, and we get to conquer those Moabites too.

So, whether we rise up saying “Miete piou de jon de rot,”
“Hreesto’s voskhrees’; Voeestee’no vozkreee’z,” or
“Good Morning, Starshine, the truth of this day persists
beyond our imaginings: “Hallelujah, Christ is risen! The
Lord is risen indeed!”