

Alleluia Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed, alleluia!

Blessed be the Holy Trinity One God. Amen.

So relatable. I don't blame them. At all. I'd rather stay in. I don't want to go *out there*.

The doors are locked. They are huddled behind walls built by dread and confusion. They are despondent and scared. Safety is as elusive as the future they cannot see amidst the fog of grief encamped among them. Amidst the nightfall, uncertainty reigns.

As one scholar put it, "They closed the doors in order to shut the world out and themselves in. The world was too frightening and they needed a safe place."

Everything seemed wobbly and up for grabs and nothing seemed sturdy. All they had known has been thrown into question. Maybe they had heard what Mary said about Jesus. But, how could it be true? It seemed like an idle tale. Nonsense. Or just plain impossible.

It is fear and loss that brings them together as they keep vigil. There is shared communal trauma. As they watch and pray. I'm sure there were plenty of tears. Weeping even. I imagine they tried to make sense of all the events of the past week. What happened? Why? And, what in the world are we supposed to do now? And who can blame them for doing exactly what they are doing.

I love being at home. Maybe you know that about me already. I'd rather be there than out anywhere most nights of the year. I cherish "staying in." I know it doesn't sound very exciting, and it isn't, but it is true. My friend and I, who are very similar, used to joke in seminary that we live exceedingly boring lives. I know we all love "a night in" from time to time.

I also know that if you are like me there are times we stay in because, well, we are stuck there. You can fill in the scenery of that room. You know its layout. Like the doors are locked, there are no keys to be found, and we cannot find a way to get out no matter what we try. We know what it is like to be trapped inside by the ways of the world. We feel the grip of fear and uncertainty, confusion, and grief.

There are other times we give in to the pull to huddle together closed off to the outside world. The magnetic pull of sin seems to force us ever inward. In a structure built for us by the powers of society. In that dwelling place we feel safe yet only encounter those just like us. In this room our own interests and agendas and security are contained and protected and bolstered. Here, a cacophony of voices within and without encourages us to stay there. Where we are in control. Where we know our way around. But never venture beyond its boundaries.

It was the last thing they were expecting. Their night was interrupted as Jesus Christ, who has been down to death and back again walks through those locked doors and is now standing among them. *The risen body of the living savior encounters them and all that they are with all that he is.* Wounds and all he is there. When they want to shrink away he draws near. He offers them peace. He breathes on them. Gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit. No longer captive to sin or even death the doors to life are opened again. They have seen the Lord. They must go back out there. Sent by the God who first sent Jesus. They are witnesses to all they have seen. Death is dead, Jesus is alive, and now all bets are off.

Yale theologian Willie James Jennings says it like this: The apostles are freed by divine action, by a God accustomed to moving through locked doors.

From that evening on the first day of the week until now, the risen Jesus still has a penchant for moving through locked doors. Still meeting people right where they are with all that he is. Jesus has found you. Wherever you are trapped. In whatever room you feel stuck in. Wherever you are keeping vigil. If grief is your nearest friend or you feel confined in confusion. When your faith is shaky and sure. When questions come and doubts arise, as they always will. He gives you the gift of himself in bread and wine, in water, word, and in the presence of each other over and over again. This gift is not and never will be dependent on the strength or supposed instability of your faith. It is dependent on him.

Now, a peace that the world cannot give is yours. Jesus comes close to you. The one who is the alpha and omega now holds all your time in his hands. The same hands that have already carried you from death to life. Hands that know pain and loss, hands that still bear wounds, and hands that reach out to you now with plentiful amounts of love and promise, enough for each day. Now we have been made witnesses of all that we have seen.

This morning, Sophia, Henry, and Charlie will be baptized. In this water they will be made new creations in Christ. Here, they will be given the Holy Spirit just like those disciples before them. Eternal life and all that brings will be unlocked for them forever. Set free from the bondage of earning and deserving they will be forgiven for all time. Just like us.

From here, Jesus says: "As the Father sent me so I send you." The tide of those waters catch us and take us back out into the world. Sophia, Henry, and Charlie are now all fellow workers with us in the Kingdom of God.

It's nice to stay in, at least I think so, but that is not the life of the baptized. We are propelled from this bath, back outside. Our faithful God will sustain us as we testify to all that we have seen. Beyond these walls, in our bodies, we put flesh and blood on these words we will soon sing: *Now in the latter days you call, O Christ, and plead the promise clear, that power grasped is none at all, and serving shows your Spirit near, As nations*

*clash and wisdom wanes, as glories tempt and greed sustains, you bid us choose in every hour the power of love, the greatest power, that love may herald God's domain, and you at last may come to reign.*¹

The disciples are nothing if not relatable. The risen one has come to each of us and still does. Just when we need him and least expect him. Together we walk forward, doors wide open. Into this risky and trustworthy life of death and resurrection that is lived in a thousand ways. Death is dead and we have died with christ. Jesus is alive and so are we. All bets are off.

Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed, alleluia!

¹ *Before the Ancient One Christ Stands*, All Creation Sings 953