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Love Broken Wide Ope

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

Welcome to the other side.

They had no idea where all of this was headed. And how could they have. Just a month ago we were with them here in the upper room. The same place we find ourselves again today. It was Maundy Thursday. On that night, though, things were different. Jesus told them he was only going to be with them a little while longer. He said things like “where I am going you cannot come.” Then, when everything got quiet he got on his knees and took each of their feet in his hands and washed them one by one. He spoke to them, his disciples, and said, love one another just as I have loved you.

They could not have dreamed then how far that love would go. Or as we sang in our entrance hymn, its length and breadth, fulness, depth, and height. That was then. This is now.

On the other side of the Great Three Days of Christ’s death and resurrection things have changed. This love that Jesus spoke about and embodied throughout his life has come into sharper focus. It has been shown for all that it is and more. This love has gone further than they could have ever imagined. Its definition expanded. It has gone all the way down to death, into the grave, then back again. The tomb is empty. This love has been broken open and set loose. This love is on the move. There is no telling where it will end up.

We might be back in the same upper room. But things are not the same anymore. We know that feeling. We’ve all been back somewhere after some time has passed. A place that we thought we knew but is hardly recognizable to us now. The bones of the place are the same but it's in a whole new world. It can be dizzying and unsettling trying to make sense of a new normal.

Especially when that normal doesn’t feel normal at all.

No longer contained in a room or a tomb: love has left the building.

We are out in the wild. That is where we find Peter. In a trance. He had a vision. He saw something. And he has to give voice to what he experienced. That is all it was. Not just any experience either. An experience that came into direct conflict with so much he had thought he

knew about tradition and faith. It was one thing when Jesus himself said, “You have heard it said, but I say to you.” Now, it’s just Peter.

He’s already been criticized for who he has been eating with. He has no idea how this testimony is going to be heard and received. How it will land. What will happen?

There is fear and risk in this. In my own life there have been many times where I felt like I had something to say. A truth to tell. A story to make known. Like the Spirit was doing something in me. Not entirely sure how it was going to be received.

I have also been on the other end of a word. I had to either respond to an unfamiliar word rooted in someone else's experience or turn away and move further inward back to what I have always known.

Still, amid uncertainty he has to testify. He opens his mouth and lays out what he saw.

Step by step. There were animals of all kinds. And a voice that says, “get up, kill and eat.” Disoriented, he would never do that. Never has anything unclean or profane touched as much as grazed his lips. The voice rebukes him. What God has made clean you must not call profane. Really?

Love has reached beyond piety and performance. Broken apart borders and boundaries. Love has found the gentiles. Once enemies they are now grafted in. Made a part of God’s salvation story. The faithfulness of God has embraced *them*. They have eternal life. The promises of God are for them.

Of course, maybe you have been thinking it already: they are us. You and me.

All of us, here, once outsiders. We have been brought into the house of God.

This morning Kathryn, Michael, and Amelia will be baptized. The love of God will come directly to them in word and water.

And, just as Jesus did in that upper room, that love will be poured out over them. They will be washed and cleansed. Forgiven. They will be connected to Jesus Christ like branches on the tree. Dying and rising with him they are members of his body. The love of God will be their guide and constant companion. That love has placed the Spirit inside you. Jesus will never leave you or forsake you. Kathryn, Michael, Amelia: you belong. Period. May that always be your experience and testimony.

From there, to here, that love of God made known in Christ has just a little further to go. Then it will be all in all. What John witnessed is as good as done. You can count on it. The home of God will be among mortals. God will dwell with us. On that last day all things will be made new. The one who washed us will wipe every tear from our eye. Mourning and crying and pain will be no more. This is our future. The future won for us through his dying and rising. Even time itself which seems so often like the one tyrant that always gets its way no matter what will one day bow to the one who is the alpha and omega. Our beginning and end.

In between now and then this most excellent gift of love has been poured into our hearts so we can pour it back out onto all the world's parched places. It has become the animating force for all our vocations. This love has a way of reorienting us. Placing us somewhere new. Making us a part of all that God is up to. Just like Peter. Our ears are attuned to unlikely preachers and surprising sermons. Our voices are ready to speak. Things are different here.

This love has no space for sentimentality. This love is cruciform. This love has something to say in the face of so much sin.

“I prefer to live in the south but on my own terms” is what Walker Percy said in *signposts in a strange land*. Sometimes we are tempted to live the baptized life on our terms too. Yet, in this strange land, in his dying and rising the terms of our life themselves have been transformed. Crucified and resurrected.

All we can do is join the psalmist and all creation, our voices joining theirs singing praises to their God and our God, who:

turns things upside down

shifts the ground under our feet

brings the outsiders in

Forgives you with no strings attached

Loves you without regard

and who always gives life where there has only been death.

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