

‘This is THE Day’  
Rev. Dr. Ann C. Kemper  
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based on Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 and Luke 24:1-12

Easter Sunday! Happy Easter everyone! A joyous day indeed!  
As Christians we have a very special affinity for this day. For us, today is THE day!

Our faith is anchored on remembrance of the events of this day and what it means for us as a people who have continued to follow Jesus’ way for over 2000 years.

This is THE day we place our faith and truth and hope in God who not only opens God’s heart, but pours out love in such a profound and amazing way the truth of this day lives on and on and on.

The ancients prayed and sang about this day long before it ever happened. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born the Hebrew people sang a hymn of praise every time they lifted a remembrance for their release from captivity and oppression in Egypt.

The Psalm we read this morning is one of those Psalms. Parts of it went like this:

<sup>24</sup>This is **THE** day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

<sup>21</sup>I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup>The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.

Today we celebrate the cornerstone of our faith: the resurrection.

There has been quite a bit of contemporary debate about whether the resurrection actually happened. Certainly no one can argue...*something* happened...but in recent, modern history...there isn’t universal consensus that Jesus actually arose after being dead three days.

There is, however, agreement that people in those early days experienced an incredible and powerful encounter with Jesus after his death. Through the power of the Holy Spirit people were convinced of the resurrection to the point of choosing to face death rather than recant their beliefs.

That’s hard for us to grasp, isn’t it? Would we be willing to die for our faith in Jesus? Apparently there were those in the early church who did choose death over renouncing Jesus...and why would you do that if you were not deeply and overwhelmingly convinced of the resurrection?

They were not ones to reject the very cornerstone of faith in Jesus: the resurrection.

Well, thank goodness we don't live in first century Palestine and have to make that choice! Or during the second and third century persecution of Christians; or the fourth century's battle over Christendom...and I could go on and on.

As far as I can tell, none of us have ever had to choose death over giving up on Jesus.

But I guess the further we get from the actual event it's natural people will begin to question the validity of the resurrection, but for me, that's not faith. It's more like disillusionment.

Saint Paul says faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." [Hebrews 11:1]

Because of the resurrection, do we hope for life eternal with God; do we have conviction of the resurrection without seeing it for ourselves?

We weren't one of the women who were the first to discover Jesus gone from the tomb; we were not one of the apostles who were witnesses to the life, teachings, miracles, and healings of Jesus...we are merely those who do our best to follow in the footsteps of the faithful believers who went before us.

My friend, Rev. Wilson Jones wrote this morning on his facebook timeline:

"Jesus did not rise from the dead to bring us joy. Jesus rose from the dead so we might live in a certain hope that God will finish what God started. And as Easter people, we invite others to join us as we join in the work of transforming our world."

You see...part of what we get wrong about the resurrection is that the salvation of the world was a one-time event. Through the power of the resurrection...and faith in the resurrection...we become instruments of Jesus to fulfill God's plan for the world:

Transforming it from a world of hopeless and fear to a world of hope and assurance.

When we read the story in Luke...12 verses in all. Something happened in those few moments.

There is no denying lives changed in those 12 verses. Because lives change...the world changed! From perplexity, fear, incredulousness, to amazement...the first witnesses to the resurrection suddenly morphed into stunned believers of our God whose steadfast love is so great it endures forever! Death cannot conquer God's love!

...and those early disciples helped usher in an ongoing transformation of the world.

Whether you believe in the literal or metaphorical resurrection you can't deny that the world changed in 12 verses!

Many of you know, our modern Christian church in North America is in decline. We have many people who no longer find the church and its message relevant to their lives today.

It would be easy for me to relate that decline to those who choose (for various reasons) to no longer see the cornerstone as relevant...and in rejecting that cornerstone, the church and its ministry and message is left in a quandary.

Without a cornerstone our foundation shakes. The bricks begin to crumble...until finally what is left is mere rubble...remnants of what those 12 verses conveyed.

Our lives should change after Easter morning.

Easter brings to us the opportunity to reevaluate where we place our priorities; how we invest our time; and in whom we place our trust.

We have a choice to make today. We can leave this worship service on Easter morning as though nothing has changed in our lives.

Or...we can leave knowing something has changed and we can leave amazed at what God has done in Christ Jesus...and then *live* the amazement as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

<sup>23</sup>This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup>**This is THE day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Amen!