

Dwelling in Dissonance

Easter 2026

Christ is Risen; can you Believe it?

Christ is Risen! (He is Risen indeed!)

But wait, **what does this mean? And can you believe it?** O dear friends of Jesus gathered here today, we were here, in this same room, just a short while ago grieving his loss – we had a funeral, with tributes and everything. Can it be that his story is not over? Can it be that somehow death has not held him? Can it be that the cycles of hatred, violence, and vengeance that put Jesus on the cross have somehow been broken and that he, like wheat sleeping unseen in the earth, has arisen? Can it be that the hard packed, stony ground on the road to Golgotha has given way to the soft, rich soil of the garden, from which the green blade now rises? Can it be that this incredible news is not news locked in an ancient past, but that it is news for us today? Is there something here in this news to call us back to life again? Can there really be Good News?

News....oh, the news. We know all too much about it. We know how bad it sounds. Wars. Crises. Death. Destruction. We know that “Gospel”—good news—is something that sounds laughable, even an oxymoron, in the world we live in today. And yet, wonder of wonders, confounding, perplexing, our Easter herald Mary Magdalene gives us the news: “I have seen the Lord!” Jesus is risen from the dead. **What does this mean? And can you believe it?**

Throughout Lent we have been dwelling in dissonance as we journeyed with Jesus towards the cross. Dissonance, disharmony, discord. These realities shape our world and

instead of pretending it is otherwise, we have been facing this reality, together with Jesus our master and friend. We have remained with Jesus in the clash between grief and glory, between the known and the unknown, between our courage and our fear, between power and powerlessness, between complicity and innocence, between triumph and death. On Good Friday, too, we sat perhaps deeper than ever in dissonance. Life, love, goodness, slain, taken, extinguished, buried. And now today, there is Good News – news not that resolves all our questions but that keeps us still in dissonance, dissonance epitomized in the question: “what does this mean?” But for disciples of Jesus past and present the dissonance generated by Mary’s pronouncement is unexpected – out of the ordinary. Now the discord and the clash occur between our despair at the many crises of the world we see before us and Mary’s incredible words: “I have seen the Lord.” What does it mean to pair the news of our day with Mary’s words? “Geopolitical crisis – I have seen the Lord!” “Energy Crisis – I have seen the Lord!”; “Community crisis – I have seen the Lord”, “Personal crisis – I have seen the Lord!” **What does this mean, and can you actually believe it? Can you believe that God is doing a new thing in spite of the worst that the world can throw at you?**

Maybe we can’t or don’t...at least not yet. Maybe we are too jaded to believe anymore. Or, maybe we want to believe but we are still looking for convincing evidence. Maybe we are sprinting here and there, racing ahead of each other trying to get a handle on life’s challenges. Maybe in the midst of this all we believe that God is up to something, but we still don’t really know what. Maybe we are like Peter and the disciple who Jesus loved, curious to go into the tomb, believing that something had happened to

Jesus, but not sure what. Has his body been assumed into heaven? Has it been stolen? Did this have something to do with what he had told us would happen? Maybe there's nothing new here after all. Maybe there is an explanation that makes sense in this world as it is, a world depressingly predictable, where all the bad things never seems to change. Then again, *maybe something new has happened?* Maybe just like Peter and the beloved disciple, we might leave here today, and return to our homes, shaking our heads, saying, **it couldn't be, could it? What if it could? What if God could do a new thing, even in the face of the worst situation.**

Or maybe like Mary we won't rush home. Maybe like Mary we will linger; maybe we will weep in the in between spaces of life where we don't know what will come next and the losses seems to pile up on loss. Maybe like Mary we will let our longing keep us close to the tomb – to the place of death's seeming finality – maybe we will stay there long enough to have an encounter with God's act of newness shattering our expectations – breaking in unexpectedly, out of the blue. Maybe as we wait with Mary there, *we will hear our name spoken.* There is something so profound about Jesus speaking Mary's name in that moment. It is so personal. I like to think that in speaking her name, Jesus acknowledges all of who Mary is: her fears, her pain, her dashed hopes.

We may not be in the quiet of the garden this morning, but can you hear Jesus speaking your name here and now? As she turned around, Mary thought Jesus was a gardener until he spoke her name. Can the presence of Christ in each of us this Easter morning become apparent when we speak each other's names? Can speaking each other's names lovingly acknowledge who we are in our fear and pain and dashed hopes and also

offer new hope? Let's speak each other's names: turn to your neighbor and speak their name (and if you don't know it, ask them). [Pause] Can you hear in your name being spoken, the word of Christ to you this morning saying:

“I know this journey is hard. But that which you grieve and weep for, that which you fear, those things in this world that lead you to despair, their power and presence is not absolute. They cannot hold you forever.” **Can you believe it?**

Whether we rush home today wondering “it couldn't be, could it?” Or whether we linger like Mary and hear our name spoken, the Gospel, the good news for us today is that despite facing a road ahead with many unknowns, we walk the road that the risen Christ has charted before us and so we have hope that this world as it is does not have futility as its end and goal; we have hope that God really has done, is doing, and will do a new thing in our lives and that we can rejoice in this. This does not mean we leave dissonance behind. Indeed, on this side of reality we will always dwell in dissonance. The triumphant harmonies of Easter Sunday will, until the day of the Lord, still be accompanied by the discordant sounds of the world as it groans in labour pains waiting for rebirth. But what has changed with the Good News of Jesus' resurrection is that we can begin to let go of the fear that all we will ever have is dissonance—that all that ever has been, is all that ever will be; that there is nothing new under the sun, as the writer of Ecclesiastes worried. **Can you, this morning, believe that God can do something new? Can you believe it?** The Easter challenge for us as we leave here today is to let go of cynicism and despair and believe. Can we let go of the need to desperately hold on to something predictable, even if it is cynicism and despair?

This, perhaps, was the challenge Jesus gave to Mary before she ran back to the disciples. Mary, evidently, wanted to hold on to him – to have him with her as before, to retain the predictable, the known, the sure. Jesus said: “Do not hold on to me.”

Something had changed. He was with her again, but not as before and it was important that Mary understand that. She had to let go of the need to have Jesus back the way she had him before, so that she could embrace a new task: to go and to proclaim in word and deed the Good News that God had done and was doing a new thing to bring a new creation, first through Jesus and then through those who would walk in his way.

Letting go is hard and let’s face it sometimes we have no choice in the letting go – sometimes, it is foisted upon us. Sometimes we must let go of people we love, and on special occasions like this one, we often remember them, missing their presence with us. Sometimes we must let go of dreams, of best laid plans, of visions of the future. And often we wonder, can there be new life even in the letting go? Jesus’ instructions to Mary to “go” is his answer. Don’t stay here too long; don’t hold on to me. Don’t hold on to the merely predictable. But go. Walk forward. And tell that God has done a new thing.”

What part of life is God asking you to let go of as you walk the road forward today following the risen Christ? I invite you to take a quiet moment, close your eyes, clench your fists out in front of you and imagine holding tightly to something in your life – maybe it is a concern for the future, for the world, for your children or grandchildren, for your health, for the health of a loved one, for a loss, for a relationship. Now hear again Jesus speaking your name, and asking you to let go, not to hold on. Open your fists

and then hear Jesus say, “Go. I am going to God and will send you a comforter to guide you for the road ahead. Go!”

Dear friends of Jesus, **He is risen! Can you believe it? Believe it! Alleluia.**

AMEN.

Communion

Throughout Lent, Good Friday, and now on Easter Sunday, the Gospel of John has been our primary Gospel text guiding us. One of the unique features of the Gospel of John is that it does not contain an account of Jesus’ institution of the Lord’s Supper like Matthew, Mark, and Luke do. There might be any number of reasons for this, but I think one of the most significant reasons that John chose not to include what the other Gospels did is because for him, Jesus is, from very early on in his Gospel, identified as the food and drink that “endures for eternal life,” as the “true bread from heaven” and “true drink.” In John chapter 6, Jesus performs a wondrous miracle of making five barley loaves and two fish feed a crowd of five thousand people and everyone is amazed. But lest we think this great miracle was what Jesus really wanted to leave people with, we must continue reading in John chapter 6, where we find Jesus running away from those same crowds after this, hiding from them. He knew that they interpreted such miraculous signs in the wrong way – they believed that Jesus would take all that is lacking, all that is wrong with the world, and fix it through sheer force of will and power. They wanted to crown him

worldly king then and there. So, when the crowd finally catches up with Jesus on the other side of the sea, he disabuses them of this idea by saying:

John 6:26 "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

You aren't pursuing me because you saw a way of abundance and sharing in me that is different than the way of the world, but because you "ate your fill of the loaves." (John 6:26) Jesus then issues his imperative command to them:

John 6:27 ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

And then just a short while later, Jesus says:

John 6:33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

These words prove to be a scandal to listeners. After all, it is a rather bizarre claim. How can a person, except by a grotesque cannibalism, offer themselves as food and drink for others? These words of Jesus continue to scandalize us, I think, for the same reason they did his original hearers. When we celebrate communion, we often wrestle with how receiving the bread and the juice might be receiving *life and salvation* from Jesus, and indeed, our Anabaptist Mennonite ancestors struggled with this too, sometimes downplaying the mystery of communion sacrament. But what strikes me in John's presentation of Jesus as true bread and true drink, is that he asks us to be fed by coming to Jesus and following him and have our thirst satisfied through belief in his words and

his way through this world. Talking about coming to Jesus and following him and being satisfied through belief in his way is not merely symbolic language. Rather, a true hunger and thirst is met in him, for he draws us deeper into the love and care of God as we sojourn through our lives on this earth.

Bread – In a world of many hungers and of many breads that promise to satiate, Jesus says: “I am the bread of Life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.”

Juice – And in a world of many thirsts and of many drinks that promise to quench our thirsts, Jesus says: “Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)

For I am “true food” and “true drink.”

In a moment, I will invite our ushers forward to prepare the elements. For those worshipping from home, you are welcome to prepare your elements now. Dorothy will begin playing on piano and then I invite you to come up this aisle and exit out that aisle. As you receive the bread, you are welcome to eat it – you will be greeted with the words: **“this is the bread of life”** and as you eat the bread, I ask you to consider that eating it joins you to each and every one here in our common goal of seeking Jesus together to have our deepest hungers satisfied. As you receive the cup, you are welcome to drink it – and with it you will be greeted with the words: **“this is the cup of life”** and again I ask you to consider as you drink it that it joins you to each and every one here in our common goal of believing in Jesus’s words and way together. On this glorious Easter morning, we eat together and are joined together in the one who’s life is not confined to the past but –

can you believe it -- lives and reigns together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one
God, forever and ever. AMEN

**May you go from here, like Mary Magdalene,
paying attention,
being astonished,
and then telling others about it.**

**Let us proclaim with Mary:
We have seen the risen Lord!
Christ is risen!
Christ is risen indeed!
Hallelujah!**

May you go with the risen Christ's peace surrounding you. Amen.