

Sermon: Christ has been raised  
Easter Day, 2020  
Matthew 28:1-10

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Emmanuel Church, Staunton  
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Do not be afraid! Twice we hear this in our gospel reading, first by the angel and second by Jesus himself. The women come to the tomb expecting to find Jesus' dead body, and instead see an angel who has rolled back the stone that had covered the entrance to the tomb. The angel who has plopped himself on top of the stone is bound to have a BIG smile on his face as he tells the women not to be afraid, that Jesus has been raised from the dead and has gone ahead of them and they will see him in Galilee! And the women leave the tomb with that strange mix of fear and great joy. Fear and great joy.

Most of us are familiar with fear these days. COVID-19 has caused a seismic shift in our world, and we have all kinds of reasons to be afraid: job loss, sickness, and death. Right now we may be afraid of many things. So often fear paralyzes us and blocks our capacity for joy. And for love. In this Easter story we hear that Jesus has been raised from the dead! In this amazing story, which is OUR story as followers of Jesus, we learn that death is not the final word, that God's love has power over death. "Into this death haunted world, God breathes new life." (The Rev. Samuel Lloyd, III)

In many ways we are now experiencing a death haunted world; we are facing our own mortality. Living in this time of pandemic is strange and disturbing. But even in this season of a pandemic the Easter story still holds true! *Especially* in this dark time, we can remember the beautiful reality that God will see us through the worst of times. While Jesus experienced his darkest day at his crucifixion, he was raised to new life on Easter morning. Death has been conquered on this Easter morning. We are free to experience great joy. God will not abandon us. Christ has been raised. And the risen life in Christ, is all about love.

On this day of Resurrection, may we release our fears to God, and let the bright light of great joy and love that is the resurrected Christ live in us and guide us today and in the days to come!

Amen.