A New Day Dawning

If you were trying to tell someone about Jesus, how would you describe the roller coaster ride that was the last week of Jesus’ life? Last Sunday, we celebrated what we call Palm Sunday, marking Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem. On that day, his followers must have thought that anything was possible. There he was at the front of a procession that numbered in the hundreds or maybe even the thousands. Other than a few words from the Pharisees, all the authorities stayed in the background. No one tried to stop him. Even the Roman soldiers remained quiet. No one knew what to do with this strange man with all his weird ideas about religion.

And then came Friday, and Jesus was nailed to a cross, and it seemed like all hope was lost. But as the Apostle Paul said, “Hope that is seen is no hope at all.” For Jesus’ friends and followers, it must have looked like God had given up on them, but as we know, that’s just the moment when God does his best work.

Just a day earlier, when Jesus was with his disciples in that Upper Room, he broke the bad news. He was leaving them. “In my Father’s house there are many rooms, and I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back to get you, so you can be where I am.”

Recently, I was listening to Bruce Springsteen’s “Thunder Road,” and there’s a line in there where he says he’s riding out tonight to case the promise land. And isn’t that what Jesus did for us. He went to that place where all of us are afraid to go and then came back to tell us it’s okay. Jesus left us to case the Promise Land and then came back to tell us that we don’t have to be afraid, because Christ has gone before us, and is now beside us. We are not alone, and never have to be again. Sometimes, we’ve just have to believe in the absence of all physical evidence, and that’s what happened on the day we celebrate today.
And now, Jesus has left us with a decision to make. Do you believe the story? Are you willing like Jesus to base your eternal existence on it? Are you going to sit back and do nothing as this world moves further and further away from God, or are you going to do something about it?

Now to be fair, even on Easter morning, none of disciples were instant converts, and even after seeing Jesus in the flesh, they still had doubts, but a new day was dawning, and before that day was over, Peter and the other disciples would have what John Wesley called, “a faith that could save them.” They saw the risen Christ and all their fears were gone, never to come back. These men believed in what they saw so strongly, that each of them was willing to die a horrible death rather than back down on what they saw and they took that message to the ends of the known world, willingly embracing Christ’s marching orders to Go out and make disciples of all nations.”

We are Easter people. It’s time we start believing that with “God, all things are possible.” We are born in the light, and because a new day has dawned for us, each of us can boldly claim the Spirit’s presence in our lives and go out and make disciples with the assuredness that Christ goes before us.

Because it’s a new day, each of us can go out and help remake the institution of the church into the kind of place where all God’s people are welcomed. So many people are turning their backs on the church and we can stop it right here in our parish. We can make sure that everyone feels the same love of God and people that we do.
Because it’s a new day, all of us can show love to everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from. We can make sure that feel at home as soon as they walk through our doors.

Because it’s a new day, none of us have to live in fear, because the Bible says that perfect love drives out fear, and fear has no place in the life of a believer.

Because it’s a new day, each of us can teach the world about Jesus, believing him when he said that we don’t have to be worried about what we say, because it will be the Spirit working through us.

Because it’s a new day, all of us can witness to our friends and family about Jesus and his redeeming work on the cross. We can stem the tide and let the world know what we believe is really good news, because it can save our lives.

Because it’s a new day, each of us can share what Paul calls, the fruits of the Spirit, which include peace, love, joy, among others, and they give us our reason for living. We can do all these things, because, as like Paul said in Philippians, we “can do anything through Jesus Christ, who gives us strength.” Today is the day, when we believers actually start believing that Christ has died. Christ has risen and Christ is coming back. It’s a new day and God has invited all of us to work along- side his Son remaking this world into the kind of place where we say, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and we actually mean it. Let these words form our prayers as we boldly go out and reclaim our proud heritage as believers in the risen Christ. Amen.