



WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

April 3, 2016, Second Sunday of Easter

John 20:19-31

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Dear Lord, help us to see you as clearly as Thomas and the others did. Remind us that by your Spirit you are right here beside us, all around us, and within us. Help us to grasp the peace that you so kindly offer, amen.

What just happened? I swear I blinked and it was all over. One minute Holly and I were talking about Lent and what we were going to give up or do this year, and the next Michael was preaching about Cosmologists and how that relates to Easter. What. Just. Happened? If I missed a beat, and I've been here every Sunday and Wednesday morning since Christmas, then you most likely missed a beat or two as well. So, let's review these past three months together!

Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." (Luke 2:40) When he was about twelve, his family went to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, and mistakenly left him behind in the temple because his parents had already joined their caravan to return home to Nazareth. When they went back for him they found him listening to the religious leaders and asking profound questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. (Luke 2:40)

Later, John called out in the wilderness urging people to change their ways and to repent, telling everyone that the Kingdom of God was near, that it was on its way. Then Jesus asked John to baptize him and following his baptism, Jesus quickly departed and was then tempted for forty days in the wilderness. Having been



tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus remained sin free and did not give in. God was pleased and so it was time for Jesus to begin telling everyone that the Kingdom of God had indeed arrived and so His adult ministry begins.

What better way to be a leader than to have followers and helpers to spread the message? So Jesus began to gather His disciples. He would begin with twelve; the twelve whom he kept closest to Him, and then he would have many, many more (billions, in fact, but let's not get ahead of ourselves). Several of the original twelve disciples were fisherman and Jesus told them to put down their nets, that now instead of catching fish he would teach them how to fish for people who needed to be caught for God.

Religious leaders seemed puzzled by Jesus and so He explained to them that He was a doctor of sorts. That one does not go to a doctor when they are well, but when they are sick, and that similarly he is God's doctor brought to heal and forgive those who are hurt and sick because they have broken God's Law. And, in order for Jesus to heal them, he knew he had to go where they were, so he sought to find and to save sinners like you and me.

First he changed water into wine at a wedding party, then he started casting out demons, as well as healing others. After numerous other happenings, Jesus eventually gives the Sermon on the Mount. This is when he breaks down "The Law" and teaches about God's commandments in more practical and precise terms. He turns the Law on its head and explains that the way we think and act towards others is more important than how we wash our hands or the kind of food we eat. He told everyone to be good and generous, caring and loving, kind and tender hearted. Then his disciples asked him how they ought to pray and that's when Jesus taught them something similar to the Lord's Prayer. The prayer that we will all say together today during communion.

Jesus also said, "When you pray to God, tell Him plainly what you need. Ask, and he will give it to you; look for him and you will find him; knock, and God Himself will open the door to you." He taught His disciples to build their lives on His



teachings, to build their faith with a foundation of rock, and that by doing so, nothing can happen that will shake them, rather they will stand firm in their faith and in their belief.

He also told many parables, he walked on water, fed more than 5,000 people with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish, healed a Syrophenician woman, and was taught by another woman that even dogs are fed scraps from the table. And of course He told many more parables.

All the while he kept trying to explain to his disciples that he was the Messiah, and that he would be killed, and after three days rise again. But they didn't get it and they kept missing the point. Eventually he was transfigured on a mountaintop in front of Peter and James and John. Now they start to get it but still don't fully comprehend it. He heals a soldier's son from a great distance, gives blind people their sight back and he teaches an awful lot about forgiveness.

He spoke about the kingdom of heaven being like an invitation to a wedding banquet and then again like a thief in the night. And then he spoke about using one's talents, both literally and figuratively, in spreading the kingdom of God. He eventually told Zacchaeus to come down from a tree. He raised his friend Lazarus from the dead and then Mary washed his feet with her hair and prepared him for burial, but still no one else seemed to get what he was about to endure.

And then we find ourselves, two weeks ago, on what is called both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. Palm Sunday because we are reminded of the triumphant entry of Jesus going into Jerusalem but Passion Sunday because he is going there to die. He goes there to be king, but rather than sit on a throne with a crown of jewels, as the people had thought and wished, he is nailed to a cross with a crown of thorns. He goes there not just to die, but he is brutally beaten and nailed to a cross only to hang there and die, humiliated, in front of everyone. In front of shouting Jews and laughing Roman soldiers, in front of his supportive friends and his loving mother.



But before he dies he hosts the last supper and he showed us what it means to be a true servant by washing his disciples' feet. And then he is betrayed, he goes to trial, the cock crows three times. Soldiers cast lots for his clothes, they put a crown of thorns on his head, spit on him, whip him one lashing shy of death, force him to carry a cross through a city and up a mountain, but he can't, and then they nail him to the cross, and continue to mock him and taunt him.

Then the two people nailed to crosses beside him have the chance to believe, and to repent, and one does. Then Jesus cries out, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani!" And finally he gave a last cry and breathed his last. Simultaneously, the sky went completely dark and there was an earthquake, and the curtain in the temple was torn in half. Then, not only that, the centurion who was guarding Jesus and the others with him, said, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

After he died he was buried and after three days he rose again. He was victorious over death just as he kept telling everyone he would be. They believed Him but when it was time for him to die, they forgot, they couldn't believe, it was so hard to believe. All the excitement of Palm Sunday just happened and they had an incredible supper with the one who was to be anointed King. You see, He was going to be King of the Jews but instead he died. Why didn't he stop them from doing that to Him? He could have, but He didn't.

And you know what, he did rise again. He rose again 2,000 years ago and then he went and appeared to his loved ones, and they believed. Then he showed up to countless others. He even converted Saul on the road to Damascus.

He conquered death for all of us. He went through Hell and back so that we could have the Peace of Christ in our hearts. So that we could know that God loves us. That He loves us so much that He sent his only Son to wash away our sins. To show us that he understands all that we are going through because He has been through it all before as well. That every time we experience pain and suffering, He too experiences that aching. And he doesn't want us to be in agony any more but rather to feel loved and comforted. To know that we are wrapped in His warm



embrace, that He has a plan for all of us, that there is eternity and that we have only had small glimpses of how wonderful that is.

This whole story is about a man on his way to a cross. An innocent man who was and is God, who knew all along that he would need to suffer, that He would need to endure more than anyone could ever imagine, so that he could set us all free. So that we could be washed clean.

He changed the world one word, one action, and one moment at a time, and in one final heroic sacrifice for us all. But the story doesn't end there. No, in many ways it is only the beginning. Last week was Easter. Death could not contain him. Rather Christ was raised again. He rose up all those years ago and He raises us up again and again every day.

He appeared to the women at the tomb. Then he appeared to the disciples in the upper room. Then he appeared again to let Thomas not only see his wounds but to touch his lacerations so that he might believe. And the story doesn't end there. The last lines of today's text tell us, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

But hold on, wait a minute, I overshot today's text. I moved on too quickly. What. Just. Happened?

Christ appeared when they were afraid. When they were locked in a room for fear of losing their lives. Christ gently and quietly shows up and tells his disciples, "Peace be with you," and he breathes the Spirit on them. It is His Spirit, the Spirit of the Living God, the Spirit of Truth and of Life, falling afresh on each of them. It is the Spirit that moved over the watery chaos in the beginning of time and created order out of disorder. It is the Spirit in God and of God that is in each of us.



Friends, all this was written so that we might believe. So that we may be comforted in the truth. So that we may be reassured. So that we may remember that no matter what we are going through, God is with us and by that we are to be put at ease, and to be at peace. Our wounds do not separate us from God, rather they bind us all the more closely to him. For as it is written, “we are the temple of the living God; as God said, I will live in them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they shall be my people... then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Children of God, remember this today, remember it tomorrow, remember it the rest of this Eastertide, and for the rest of your life, that God is with you always, and be at peace. Amen.