

Sermon Notes from CMJ
Third Sunday of Easter – Year B

RCL Readings: Acts 3:12-14; Psalm 4; 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36-48

ACNA Readings: Micah 4:1-5; Psalm 98; 1 John 1:1-2:2; Luke 24:36-49

Introduction – The catchcry “He is risen” continues to resonate joy and hope in our third week of Eastertide. It is such a simple message and yet contains more than a lifetime’s worth to speak to our world.

Common Theme – The resurrection is not an event relegated only to the past. The risen Lord accompanies us today in a relationship that is real. Our fellowship with him is current and expressed through our lives in his teaching, in our confessions, and in our deeds.

First Reading: Acts 3:12-14 – Following a very public healing that occurred during afternoon prayers in the temple, Peter had the opportunity to address a crowd of worshippers concerning the resurrection. This is Peter’s second public speech in the temple courts, and it reveals that the disciples continued to worship in the temple following the resurrection. A miraculous healing had occurred, and Peter answers the question: From where did the power to heal come? The power came by faith in the risen Messiah Jesus. Faith in the resurrection has power. Peter calls Jesus God’s “servant” (v. 13), and this may be an early understanding of the “suffering servant” in Isaiah 52-53. Peter is also emphatic that the God of this “servant” is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is not a “new” god, but the same God of Israel.

Second Reading: Psalm 4 – The Psalms are sacred poems, songs and prayers for corporate and individual worship. They cover a wide arrangement of emotions. There are happy psalms, sad psalms, angry psalms, and psalms of praise. Verse 1 acknowledges our need for God’s attention when we pray. The good news is that he does hear us (v. 3). The psalmist asks a valid question: How long will the ungodly continue to thrive in their false delusions (v. 2)? Sometimes, when looking at the secular, postmodern world today, we might ask, “Has the resurrection had any real effect at all?” In response to the pressures of the secular world, the psalmist urges self-control, avoiding sin (v. 4), and maintaining trust in God (v. 5). The Septuagint reads verse 4 as, “Be angry but do not sin.” We do not have to be content with how the world is progressing; anger is not a sin in and of itself for even God gets angry. While much of the world does not receive the joy of the resurrection, we can! The resurrection should fill our hearts with joy (v. 7), and that joy is a precious gift we can share.

Third Reading: 1 John 3:1-7 – In rabbinic literature, the metaphor “children of God” is used in reference to the nation of Israel (*Mishnah Avot* 3:12-14). It denotes a relationship that Israel has with the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Deuteronomy 32:6 is the passage in which God is called Father for the first time, and the children of Israel become his children. In John’s Gospel and in John’s Epistles, “children of God” refers to the believers in the risen Messiah. The resurrection is more than an event. It is a person, and we have a relationship with that person, Jesus of Nazareth.

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In that relationship, we have the honour to be called children of God. John raises an interesting question: Can the children of God keep on sinning? I doubt John is suggesting that we can live in a state of perpetual sinlessness, considering his earlier statement in 1 John 1:8, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” The context of John’s Epistle concerns love and hatred of fellow believers, fellow children of God (see chapter 2). Our relationship with the risen Lord should extend to and affect our relationships with each other, particularly those in the household of faith. Those relationships should be based on the characteristics of God’s relationship with us, including faithfulness, loving-kindness, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. As John says in verse 7, “Let no man lead you astray” and teach you otherwise.

Fourth Reading: Luke 24:36-48 – Luke’s Gospel, like John’s, places the first resurrection appearances of Jesus with his disciples in Jerusalem, while Matthew focuses on the Galilee appearances. What is important is that the appearances of the risen Jesus are many and numerous. In this passage, the resurrection is confirmed, not only by appearance, but through physical contact and consumption of food. The mystery of Jesus’ incarnation continues in his resurrection. The body that went into the tomb is the same body that came out of the tomb. He went in as a Jewish man and returns, not as a Gentile, but as the Lion of Judah (Rev 5:5). Jesus can speak, which means he can breathe; he can eat, which means he can digest. He can feel when touched, and so he has physical sensation. It truly is a mystery and a glorious one at that. Following the resurrection, Jesus continued to teach his disciples for 40 days before the ascension (Acts 1:3). While the Jewish biblical canon had not yet been closed, we can note in verse 44 that three distinct sections had been defined by the late Second Temple period. They were the Torah, Prophets, and the Psalms. Jesus proceeded to teach about himself from all of known Hebrew Scripture. “He opened their minds” (v. 45), gave them understanding of redemptive history, and reminded them they were witnesses of these things.

ACNA Addendum

Micah 4:1-5 – The first three verses of Micah 4 are a repeat of Isaiah 2:1-3. The prophets Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries, and their message to the people of Judah has some overlap. Both prophets emphasize that God will teach us his ways and that the ways of God will bring peace to a troubled world. The response to the instructions of the Lord is that we will “walk in them,” that is, we will enact God’s teaching in our lives and actions. While the passage is prophetic and speaking of the future messianic age, faith can and should be put into action now. Concerning the resurrection, that event is not something that simply occurred in the past; rather, we enact its truth in our lives today.

Psalms 98 – Psalm 98 is a song of praise that begins with a grammatical error in Hebrew. Verse 1 says, “Sing to the Lord a new song.” The words “new song” in Hebrew are *shir chadash*, in the masculine form. However, “song” is *shira*, a feminine word in Hebrew. The verse should read

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shira chadasha in the correct feminine form. Jewish exegetes take notice and conclude that the “error” is actually a hint of something larger and more exciting, that this is a messianic reference. They reason that the psalm is a messianic allusion of the future in which God becomes king of the world (*Shemot Rabbah* 23:11). In Judaism, the Sabbath is a reflection or foreshadow of the future messianic Sabbath to come, and Psalm 98 is one of the four psalms prayed when greeting the Sabbath. There are echoes of this psalm in the Song of Mary in Luke 1. Perhaps Mary was also aware of the messianic themes in the psalm and used some lines in her song following her visitation with the angel Gabriel.

1 John 1:1-2:2 – John’s Epistle highlights again the truth of the resurrection as proven by eyewitnesses. Verse 2 says, “the Life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it.” The resurrection is a historical fact, not a fable of faith given to provide meaningless hope. Hope is grounded in the reality of a risen Jesus. As the prophet Micah instructs us to walk in the ways of the Lord, John urges us to “walk in the light.” Part of our faith journey involves putting our faith into practice and “walking it out.” Again, the light of the Messiah is not simply a theory nor poetic term; rather, it is a truth revealed in a person. The resurrection is not only an event; the Resurrection is a person, the person of Jesus. We have fellowship with the risen Lord, and this fellowship extends to our brothers and sisters in faith. In John’s Epistle, the walk of faith includes confession of sin, with the knowledge that God is faithful to forgive, and the extending of fellowship and love to our neighbour. These actions demonstrate to ourselves that we really do “walk in the light.”

About the Author – The Rev. Aaron Eime is the deacon at Christ Church Jerusalem and teacher for CMJ Israel. Aaron studied in the master’s program at Hebrew University with a focus on early Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Bible. He also studied psychology and sociology at Queensland University in Australia. Aaron is a dedicated Bible teacher exploring the Hebraic roots of the Christian faith. He reads Aramaic and ancient Greek and is fluent in German and Hebrew. He has taught internationally, including in Europe, North America, Hong Kong, and China. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and three children.