**First Reading: Acts 10:34-43**

*Peter’s sermon, delivered at the home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer, is a summary of the essential message of Christianity: Everyone who believes in Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the words of the prophets, “receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

34Peter began to speak to [the people]: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

**Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24**

1Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good; God's mercy endures forever. 2Let Israel now declare, "God's mercy endures forever." 14The LORD is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation. 15Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly! 16The right hand of the LORD is exalted! The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly!" 17I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18The LORD indeed punished me sorely, but did not hand me over to death. 19Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD. 20"This is the gate of the LORD; here the righteous may enter." 21I give thanks to you, for you have answered me and you have become my salvation. 22The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. 23By the LORD has this been done; it is marvelous in our eyes. 24This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**Second Reading 1 Corinthians 15:19-26**

*Dialogue Paul describes the consequences of the resurrection, including the promise of new life in Christ to a world that has been in bondage to death. He celebrates the destruction of evil and the establishment of God’s victorious rule over all.*

19 If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

**Gospel Luke 24:1-12**

*Evidently expecting to find Jesus’ corpse, some of the women among his followers go to the tomb with embalming spices. After a perplexing encounter with the empty tomb and angelic visitors, the women become the first to proclaim the amazing news of resurrection*.

1 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

**Sermon**

Have you ever noticed how, in a mostly good way, we’ve started reframing our screw ups and mistakes in life as what we now call a “learning experience”? In a way, it’s really true. In every mistake, there’s an opportunity to learn why we shouldn’t do that particular thing or an opportunity to ask for forgiveness. In every moment where we misunderstand, there is an opportunity to learn something in a way that will stick with us. If we try something that we only realize later that we didn’t like or it doesn’t work out how we expected, we at least had the experience and may have gained a different perspective.

One summer when I was in college, I worked at a Lutheran summer camp. Now don’t misunderstand me, lots of people have gone to Lutheran summer camps and had a lot of fun and it had a positive impact on their faith journey. Anyone who enjoys camping and the outdoors, that’s great. You do you. But it is just not my cup of tea. And I did not really like the summer camp counselor experience. There were bugs. And we weren’t supposed to kill them because “all God’s critters got a place in the choir.” On one overnight in the woods, I got a tick stuck in my hand and I had to remove it myself in the dark.

So I look back on that time and say, of all the things I’ve done, I don’t think I enjoyed that very much. But it wasn’t a waste…it was a learning experience. I gained some confidence in being a responsible leader. I came out of my shell a bit as a result of the skits we had to do. I learned how to make cool necklaces with magazine pages and a piece of wire bent into a circle. And I knew that I didn’t want to do that the next summer.

It’s helpful to view our whole life as a learning experience. And today I’m going to suggest that the resurrection is a learning experience as well. I’ve noticed particularly this year how uncertain everyone seems to be in our gospel passage today. Jesus had been crucified and his body was laid in this tomb with a big stone rolled in front of the entrance. But when the women arrive there early in the morning, they find that the stone was rolled away. When they enter the tomb, the see that Jesus’ body is not there. But notice, they don’t now what to make of it at first. It says that they are perplexed. These women spent a lot of time with Jesus during his traveling ministry, they heard him teach all the time. But their first reaction to the empty tomb, it isn’t excitement, it isn’t joy, it is perplexed, confused.

It is only when the 2 men in dazzling clothes show up and give them a little more information that their memories are jogged and they can now connect what they were seeing with what Jesus had said in the past. But they didn’t get there on their own…the heavenly messengers connected the dots for them. Grasping what had happened didn’t happen right away…it was a learning experience.

After making this connection between what Jesus had said in the past and his empty tomb, the women go back and share all of this with Jesus’ other followers. And look at the impact that has…”these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” These are the people who spent the most time with Jesus, who heard most of Jesus’ teachings. Surely they would think, “Oh yeah, he did say he would do that. Woohoo! He’s back!” But it seemed to them an idle tale. They weren’t able yet to make that leap to believe that Jesus could possibly still be alive.

But Peter, takes a step beyond the rest when he decides to check things out for himself. Sure enough, he too finds an empty tomb and the linen wrappings left there. Now Peter is amazed, although what exactly he believes at that moment is unclear. For Peter and the other apostles this is a process, this resurrection thing is a learning experience for them. And by the end of this passage, we aren’t given any assurance that they all get it yet. When will they start to get it? Of course, when the risen Christ appears to them, that certainly brings them another step in faith toward the reality of resurrection and what it means for them and for the world.

We can even find evidence here that the learning continues well beyond the time that the risen Christ spends on earth in bodily form. That evidence can be found in the passage from Acts. What does the reality of the resurrection mean for Jesus’ followers and for the world? It’s Peter once again, and here he says, “ I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him.” This is Peter, quite a bit later (think months not hours) still learning what resurrection means for him, for the world. In this case, he now realizes that the resurrection means that God loves and has included the Gentiles as well. But it took a while for him to understand this…it’s been a learning experience for him.

So, what is my point? My point is that, yes we celebrate the resurrection of Christ today and yes it is central to who we are as the church and as people of faith. But that doesn’t mean

that we all, at this moment, have the same grasp of what the resurrection means for our lives and for the world. We may believe that it is something worth celebrating. But we may all be at different points in the “learning experience” of grasping what the resurrection means for our lives and for the world. Which means that some of us will find that this worship experience gives us great hope and has deep meaning while others of us are here because we know we should be but we’re not sure yet how any of this is relevant to know.

But you know what? That’s okay because at some point, the risen Christ will show up for us and then we will “get” the power of the resurrection in a way we hadn’t before. And this will happen a number of times throughout our lives…when we experience unexpected welcome…the Holy Spirit makes connections for us that we never noticed before the in the Scriptures…when we experience the great grace of God that we receive in Holy Communion…when something positive happens that perplexes us…when an experience of relating to someone different from us helps us see something new about who God is. Our faith…the reality of the resurrection…it is a learning experience that allows us to understand on new and different levels at different points in our lives.

So today I have an invitation for you. Come back again. Come back again. For those of you who are joining us this week who don’t live around here, come back to any gathering near you around this amazing story. If you live near here, I’m inviting you to come back here again. Come back to gather around the reality of resurrection, which is what we do every time we worship. If you don’t really grasp what it is all about today, you will eventually because faith is a learning experience. If you think you already grasp what it is all about, I promise that will change over time through your encounters with the risen Christ in the places he promised to be present. Amen.

**BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED**

