

All Saints

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sermon for the Sixth Sunday of Easter
Rev. Jonathan Stepp
May 17, 2020

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A little bit of humor can go a long ways in the midst of our struggle to make it through these long days of quarantine, so in that spirit, here are a few more cartoons that might bring a chuckle.



"Remember, as soon as his boss joins the videoconference, it's showtime."



"We're in the part of the movie that's usually a montage."

Our gospel reading this Sunday comes from St.

John's depiction of the long discourse of Jesus at the last supper – as Jesus prepares the disciples for his death he also prepares them for his resurrection and ascension, and that is part of the reason that we use these readings during the Sundays of Easter.

I am especially struck today by this line from Jesus: "On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me,

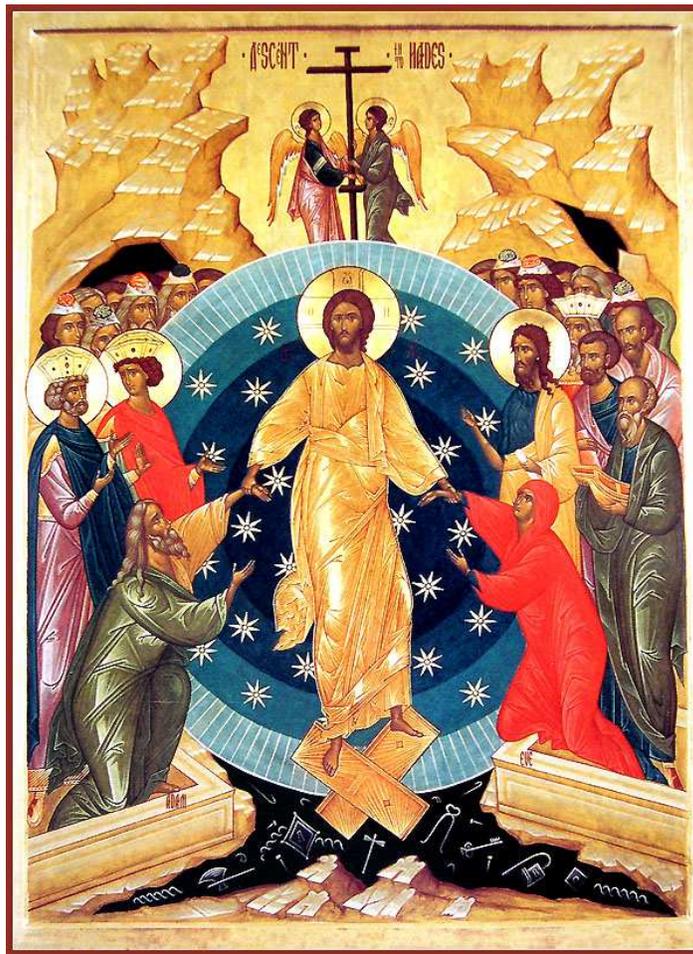


Mrs. Jones got a little too used to watching online worship from home.

and I in you.” What is Jesus telling us? He is telling us that his resurrection is the revelation to us that he exists in an intimate communion with God the Father and with us. There are at least two important implications of this reality:

One is the wonderful good news that we are included in Jesus’ death and resurrection. When we face death, we do not face it alone – Jesus shares with us in our death as we share with him in his. Likewise, our death does not mean the end of life – it merely means that life is changed – because we are also included with Jesus in his resurrection.

This icon illustrates this beautifully.



Here we see Jesus being raised from the dead. Beneath his feet the doors of hell are broken and trampled down and the two figures on his right and left, who are being raised from their coffins, are Adam and Eve. They represent all of humanity, everyone of us, included in Jesus’ resurrection and being raised up with him because we are in him and he is in us. It is also interesting to note that Jesus is not gripping us by our hands, but rather by our wrists. This reminds us that our resurrection in Jesus is not something we accomplish by tak-

ing hold of Jesus, it is something that Jesus accomplishes by taking hold of us and lifting us up out of death and into the life of the world to come.

So, Jesus is telling us that since he is in us and we are in him, we will share in his eternal life of love with the Father forever. And secondly, Jesus is telling us to look within ourselves to find his presence. Of course, as the second person of the Trinity and the creator and sustainer of the whole cosmos, Jesus is present everywhere. We may find him in the beauty of creation, the care and love of friends, the sacraments of the Church, and a thousand other places. But there is a unique and special bond that is strengthened when we look within our own hearts, minds, and souls and discover that Jesus lives as intimately close to us as our own breath, our own thoughts, and our own emotions.

This looking within to find the presence of Christ is primarily accomplished through stillness, silence, and listening. If we are to be transformed by the reality of Christ within us then we must stop our frenetic activity and be still. We must stop our frantic talking, including the endless thoughts that race through our heads, and we must be silent. And when we have become still and silent then we can hear Christ speaking his grace into the depths of our beings.

It is interesting that stillness and silence are good descriptions of much of what it has meant to be quarantined. Through no choice of our own we have found our frenetic activity and our frantic talking curtailed – if not entirely, then at least to a large extent. Have we been able to make any good use of this silence?

You may recall that the very first video we put out here on YouTube, after the quarantine began, was called “Listening” and I encouraged us all to try to make something useful of this time of silence by saying simply to God, “speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.” I hope, to some extent you have been able to do that. If you have, I hope you have found it rewarding. If you have not yet done it, rest assured that it is not too late. Even with the quarantine coming to a close we can realize that all we have to do to find Christ within ourselves is to step aside from the daily rush of life, be still, be silent, and listen.

Jesus is in the Father, and he is in us, and we are in him. This reality – and our willingness to open ourselves to this reality – is the beginning of grace, and peace, and joy in communion with God.

Amen.