

Sermon for Easter Sunday 9 April 2023 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Scriptures: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (*Insert: Alternate **Leader**, people*); Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10

### ***“One story”***

The Westminster Catechism declares the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

That may be antiquated and sexist, but we get the point. We’re here to celebrate.

That’s been the point of this six-week period called Lent. ... from its first Wednesday when, with ashes on our foreheads, we reminded ourselves that we come from nothing, and go towards nothing, as far as material existence goes, to this crowning holiday morning.

Now, with this six weeks of Basic Training completed, we are Privates, First Class, ready, willing, and able to live as Soldiers of Christ.

I put all this together as a way of announcing that all the darkness, all the surprises, the Joys and Concerns, the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth, we each go through, is one story. No matter whether I’ve been in jail most of the time, or sitting on a pile of wealth and privilege, from our point of view as Christians “Followers of the Way,” it’s all one single story.

Then, last Friday night, re-reading the commentary on the passage from Matthew’s Gospel assigned to us this Easter Sunday of the Common Lectionary, I learned we really need to hear Matthew’s church insist on verse 18 of chapter 28. Pull out your pew Bibles and look it up. The disciples **WORSHIPPED** Jesus.”

“All authority on heaven and earth has been given me.”

Hammered out in those first years of our movement, this creed was essential to these founders of Christianity. Jesus wasn’t just a teacher and friend. He portrayed, authorized, and produced our vision of reality. This was his moment ... and it still is....”to the end of the age,” as Matthew puts it.

We’ve done a lot this morning to express and define that, and we have still more to say about it; but right now, we declare and take to heart, that it all makes sense in Jesus. The Spirit of God that moved across the waters in creation; the love that binds us together as a nation; the hope and insight that our science provides; the power we have to create and, yes, to destroy ... all the curiosity that gets us up in the morning to explore, and the satisfaction that comes from fulfilling our purpose to love and expand and benefit the creation we touch and abide in ... everything hangs together through our contact with Jesus as Lord.

There is no escape, or any reason to try, this created order. There is every reason to uplift, and share, and expand the beauty that surrounds us. Nothing can separate us from the love of this Christ, and nothing can match the joy of cooperating with this scheme of things, or this Spirit that is alive within every one of us..

So, rest assured, take heart, celebrate, enjoy! This is the day, this is the story, this is the redeeming good news we have to express and live out, this morning, and forever.

Christ is Lord.

Amen.