

**St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Medina, WA**  
**The Rev. Alexander Breckinridge**  
**Church Year C**  
**Date: 3/6/16**  
**Season: Easter Day**

So here we are at Easter. But just two days ago, we were in a different place. A place of suffering and death. Good Friday. So we need to hold these two things together. Good Friday and Easter, Death and Resurrection. One without the other doesn't work. Good Friday without Easter leads to cynicism and despair. The world is nothing but suffering and sickness and loss. The powers that be are in control and there's nothing to be done about it except slog on. The world belongs to the wealthy and the powerful who bend it to their will. There's no hope for anything better.

On the other hand, Easter without Good Friday is just empty sentimentality. Flowers, bloom in the spring following the long cold winter. The birds are chirping and the bunnies are hopping. All's right with the world – until it's not.

But when we hold Good Friday and Easter together, we see that God has created this as the archetypical pattern for our lives. Resurrection follows death so that something new can be born. Easter redeems Good Friday. God has vindicated Jesus and his passion for justice for the poor and the marginalized. God has vindicated Jesus and his passion to open the hearts of the powerful and the arrogant so they can have their share in God's Kingdom.

Good Friday and Easter are about the path of the transformation, the path of dying to the old self, the selfish self, the self that imagines that is the center of the Universe. Dying to a self that is ultimately unsustainable. Let's face it, none of us is big enough or powerful enough to keep the whole show going. Doesn't matter how much money we might have, how well connected we might be, how awesome we think we are. We can't keep the whole show going. Look at the picture of Atlas holding up the world on his shoulders. He's exhausted! We long to surrender the burden of holding up the whole show and to instead just take our place in the divine order of things. We long for the old self to die so that we might be born again. We long for transformation.

And so we walk the way of Jesus. It's the path that Jesus invited us to follow when he says, "those who want to become my followers, let them take up their cross **daily** and follow me." It's the same path of transformation that the Apostle Paul experienced when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me." This way of death and resurrection, the dying of the old self so the new self can be born, this path Jesus invites us to walk, is what Jesus means when we hear him say

in John's gospel, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." This path – the dying and the rising – this path of transformation is the path to life in the heart of God – this path to life eternal. And it's a path that begins now. Today. We don't have to wait for death and long for something different in the Sweet Bye and Bye. Eternal life begins in this moment. And it begins with surrender. Surrender to Good Friday knowing that Easter follows the dying and the living. God's plan and God's pattern for transformation.

And of course there's a corporate dimension to this. Jesus' Passion means that Jesus was passionate about some things. Justice for the poor and those who are weak and excluded. Hope for those in grief and despair. Transformation for the arrogant and the powerful. His passion for all this led to his death. His life was too great a threat to the powers that be. But in the Resurrection, Jesus' passion has been vindicated. Remember, when we say that "Jesus is Lord" we also say "Caesar is **not** Lord".

Easter tells us that while all the Good Friday powers of the world were arranged against Jesus and tried to kill him they could not. He is alive. He is here. Jesus lives. Jesus is Lord.

You remember last week? Palm Sunday? You remember that on that long ago day, two processions enter the city of Jerusalem. One is led by Pontius Pilate, the imperial governor. It is impressive. It is magnificent. The full military and monetary might of the Empire is on display. It is meant to cow the citizens of Jerusalem into submission and passivity. Who can stand against the might of Rome? At the other end of the City at the same time, another procession. This one far simpler. A dusty man on a dusty donkey, and not much else to the parade. But the man is radiating something. Something deeply humble and yet very powerful. Something true and authentic. Radiating a peace that passes all understanding. The crowds that surround and cheer so lustily are filled with hope. The humility and the peace that radiate from this man offer far more than the pompous display of power and wealth at the other end of the City.

And these two processions carry on today. Right here in our midst. The first procession, the one with the might and majesty of the world on display, is a Good Friday procession. It's a celebration of the status quo, of the way things are. There's no hope for anything better. Deal with it the procession signals. The second procession is an Easter procession. It's a procession that signals that some thing new is being born. Something new is waiting. Transformation. The same old same old is no longer good enough.

Which procession, which journey, will you follow? You do have a choice, you know. Here's something I know. This life is short. I don't care whether you're 5 or 95. This life is short. There's no time to waste on fear, on confession, on "that's just the way things are." There's no time to waste following false gods and empty promises. We only

have time for the Jesus procession. We only have time for the healing and forgiveness and transformation that comes with following the Jesus procession. So don't waste your time being paralyzed. The tomb is empty. He is risen.

Today is the day we all join the parade. Jesus is here. Amen.