

A Eucharist for the 2nd Sunday of Easter

Sermon

One of the books that has inspired me in recent years is *Take this Bread* by Sara Miles. It's a story of a radical conversion.

The heart of that conversation happened like this

Early one winter morning, when Katie was sleeping at her father's house, I walked into St Gregory's Episcopal Church in San Francisco. I had no earthly reason to be there. I'd never heard a gospel reading, never said the Lord's prayer. Most certainly not interested in becoming a Christian-or as I thought of it rather less politely a religious nut. But on other long walks, had passed the beautiful wooden building, with its shingled steeples and plain windows, this time I went in, on an impulse, with no more than a reporter's habitual curiosity.

The rotunda was flooded with slanted morning light stop table in the centre of the open, empty space was ringed high above by a huge neo-Byzantine mural of and likely St figures with gold halos, dancing; outside, in the back, water trickled from a huge slab of rock set against the hillside. Past the rotunda, and a forest of standing silver crosses, there was a spare, spacious area with chairs instead of pews where about 20 people were sitting.

We sat down and stood up, saying and sat down, waited and listened and stood up and sang, and it was all pretty peaceful and sort of interesting. "Jesus invites everyone to his table," the woman announced, we started moving up in a stately dance to the table in the rotunda. It had some dishes on it, and the pottery goblet.

And then we gathered around that table and there was more singing and standing, and someone was putting a piece of fresh crumbly bread in my hands, saying "the body of Christ," and handing me the goblet of sweet wine, "saying the blood of Christ," and then something outrageous and terrifying happened. Jesus happened to me.

'the Lord is here'

Christ is risen

as we meet this morning
wherever we are
with others, or on our own
the risen Christ meets us

in word
in the breaking of bread
in our communion today

and as Christ meets us
we like Sara Miles, find our lives transformed

and know ourselves called to live his risen life,
in bringing his life changing love to others

for Sara, feeding the hungry, loving the lonely, healing the sick

Easter is not just a celebration of something
that happened 2000 yrs ago
it's the realisation that
Christ is risen
Christ is here
alive
life changing

it's the heart of our faith
of our worship and our *witness*

in our homes, in our prayers, in our meeting together
'where two or three meet together in my name, there am I'

in our caring, and serving and seeking justice
'as you did it to the least of one of these, you did it for me'

in our hospitality of stranger and friend
'as you welcome him you welcome me'

Christ is risen Alleluia!
He is risen indeed Alleluia!

This is the message of the Gospel stories of the resurrection appearances

Mary

stood by the empty tomb
in the garden
weeping
she saw a stranger
and heard a voice
'Mary'
and she knew

as we encounter Christ
we also hear,
the one who knows our name

Christ says to us
don't hold onto me
go and tell my friends
my brothers and sisters

tell them of the victory of love
the triumph of hope
the gift of life

for it is as we recognise Christ
as we hear his voice
we find we have a story to tell
a story that is both his story and our story

Good News
great news
life changing news

a story, that comes alongside our stories and transforms them
the story we have to tell is
a story of forgiveness
and welcome
and life

Peter

after breakfast by the lake
walks with Jesus
and Jesus says
do you love me
look after my lambs
follow me

and Peter
says
yes, Lord, you know I love you

as we encounter and recognise Christ
we also hear,
the one who says to us
do you love me?

care for my lambs
look after my sheep
the needy and the lonely
the struggling and the vulnerable
the ones near you
and the ones who have wandered off.

it is as we encounter Christ
as we hear his invitation

so we discover his call to love
as we say yes Lord you know that I love you
we cannot but love his friends
the friends that look like us
and the friends that are very different

Thomas

in the upper room
doubts
wonders
struggles to believe
like so many of us

and then he sees
and he doesn't need to put his hand in Jesus' side
but knows

'My lord, and my God'

and as we recognise Christ
we also hear,
the one who says to us
stop your doubting and believe

and we know
in that glimpse of Christ
in that recognition
that the Lord is here

the gift of faith
that lights the dark
not blind faith
but open eyed faith and open hearted faith
open to all the pain and suffering in the world

open to all the questions
the things that so often make belief hard

the things that make us want to say
Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and
my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

faith knows the agony, the injustice, the pain
but faith sees also the light that is Christ
even in the darkest, toughest times
and faith says
My Lord and my God

Christ
our risen Lord
here among us
recognised
in word
in breaking of the bread
in our love for each other
in our welcome of stranger
in our care for those in need
listen to me ...
and go and tell my friends
follow me ...
and care for my lambs
see me ...
and know

*alleluia! Christ is risen
He is risen indeed alleluia!*