

Eyes Wide Open

2nd Sunday of Easter, Year B – 1 John 1:1-2:2

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, April 12, 2015

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

As it seems to be every Easter, last Sunday was absolutely magnificent! Thanks to Retia and Iris and an army of Altar Guild and St. Ann's Guild members, by time for the Vigil Saturday evening, the place was looking, and even *smelling*, spectacular, and Evalyn playing our favorite hymns of the Resurrection Sunday morning even added hearing to the festival of senses. It was grand having our beautiful space packed for fully with friends and family, and the little ones were as lovely as always in their Easter finery as they scurrying around to find the eggs hidden away – though not *too* carefully – by our young people. Dave and Connie and Coy did a *super* job with the festive reception after the service – it would be an unpardonable disservice to call it “coffee hour” – and you will be delighted to know that they have agreed to take charge again next year, as soon as I give them the date – it's early, March 27.

I hung in here as long as I could, trying to use what was left of my voice to wish a happy Resurrection to as many people as I could catch, but sometime before everything was washed up, and put away, and carried off, I beat a retreat across the street to the Rectory where Jenny was putting finishing touches on our Easter feast: a turkey that had been roasting the whole time we had all been worshipping, along with all the usual accompaniments.

It had been my intention to come back over to the church in the mid-afternoon to check on things. But the long night and the very full morning, and the stupefying effects of too much shrimp and cake, and turkey and dressing, and chocolate and chocolate and chocolate, combined with the suddenly oh-so-comfortable lure of my lounge chair, drastically hastened the onset of the canonically mandated Easter afternoon clergy nap, and I was out like a light.

It was after ten and Jenny and I were just tucking ourselves in for a real night's sleep, when I finally remembered that I had not “battened down the hatches.” After briefly considering letting it go – we live in Henderson, not Manhattan – I tugged on my jeans, slipped my “warm fuzzy” over my head and fired up the truck for the *long* trip over here. I let myself in the back door as usual and flipped on the hall lights, went into the office and flipped *off* those lights that I had indeed left burning, and turned on the Parish Hall lights to confirm that there was hardly a trace left of the holy mirth from hours before. I turned on one of the lights in the Sacristy and finished updating the service register for the day, but I decided not to bother with the box full of circuit breakers needed to illuminate the church itself for my walk back to the Narthex to check the front door, some combination, I suppose, of carelessness, laziness, and pridefulness in my knowledge of this space.

In spite of some Green Street light glowing in through stained glass, it was *dark* in here as I made my way down the side aisle, brushing by the tall and fragrant lilies in the window sills. I *do* know the space pretty well, of course, and a quick check confirmed that two of the three locks on the massive front doors had already been secured. I did up the third, with that huge key that was presented to me at my installation as your Rector, and doused the Narthex lantern, once again plunging the space into darkness. On the way back, I decided to avoid the lilies by using the center aisle, and there's where I ran into trouble. I probably should have just run my hand along the back of the pew, but some combination, I suppose, of carelessness, laziness, and pridefulness... I turned the corner a little too early, and a *lot* too quickly, discovering my navigational error when my hip came into painful contact with that decorative swirl at the top of the pew-end. I stopped for a moment to rub the spot that would later grow into a lovely black-and-blue bruise that has since disappeared, regained my bearings by lining up the shadow of the

Paschal Candle with the glow from the front window, gave sincere thanks that it had not been my *knee* that had made contact, and once again considered how much wiser it is to walk in the light rather than in the darkness.

Since I pledged to preach from our Epistle lessons this Lectionary year, this Easter season – yes, it’s a whole *season*, not just one Sunday – this Easter season we get to spend some time looking at one of my favorite books of the Bible, the short First Letter of John. I’ll leave the more scholarly discussion of authorship and literary and textual criticism for our Wednesday evening program later this month – April 29, actually (plug). Suffice it to say for the moment that John has a good *deal* to say about light and darkness. John had seen darkness: the darkness of betrayal and judgement and cruelty and death. And John had seen light, culminating in and radiating from the brilliant glory of Christ’s Resurrection. And John was convinced that it was wiser, and more sensible, and much, *much* more blessed to walk in the light rather than in the darkness.

God, he starts off, *is* light, and in him there is no darkness at all. As Christians, we are called to walk with Christ in that glorious light. As Christians, we have been rescued from the darkness into which our nature had long ago fallen, and set upon a pathway glowing with God’s own brightness. As Christians, as children of the God that raised Christ from the grave, and in so doing vanquished forever the power of death and the grave, as children of God, we *are* children of light.

And yet, John says, we sometimes *choose* to walk in *darkness*. Oh, we *have* our reasons, very *old* reasons. Reasons that have to do with the knowledge of good and evil. Reasons that have to do with hiding from the Father of light. Reasons that have to do with some combination, I suppose, of carelessness, and laziness, and, of course, pridefulness. As so we choose to avert our eyes from the blazing light of truth, afraid it will expose the darkness of our shameful actions and our *more* shameful thoughts. We choose to cover our eyes so we can engage in the petty, prideful prejudices that separate us from each other, and alienate us from the God of light. We choose to shut our eyes tight, we choose to tell ourselves the lie that we aren’t *really* sinning, we choose to walk on and on in darkness, until some injury, some heartbreak, some self-inflicted pain teaches us *again* that “he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” until we learn *again* it is wiser and much, *much* more blessed to walk in the light of Christ’s never-ending, never-failing love for you and for me.

Welcome to the light, my friends!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!