

Easter Day

In the first moments of humanity's experience of Jesus' resurrection, we got pretty clingy. Like an anxious toddler or a boyfriend fearing a break up, the people who first saw the risen Lord grabbed hold of him and didn't want to let go.

The women in today's lesson from the Gospel of Matthew "came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him."

Some years we read from the Gospel of John and hear of Mary Magdalene finding the risen Lord in the garden, him then telling her "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father."

In Matthew's account, he said to the women, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

They grabbed and held; he said let go and let others know.

This is a very human urge, to hold on, certainly what any of us would do, for a long time, if any of our beloved dead were raised and returned to our embrace.

We wouldn't let go!

How much we would wish to hold them.

Indeed it is a tempting way to go through life, holding on, not letting go, conserving and preserving what we have.

Jesus had to speak very forcefully to bring the women's attention to a new and different way of being.

They could let go; he could go on ahead of them;

and they could live differently in light of the Resurrection.

So can we.

The new life of Christ means we live in a different age than any that came before, an age in which we need not fear the passage of time and the passing of stages of life.

We can let go.

The blessings of the present need not be desperately held onto; the future need not be feared.

God has opened up in the Resurrection a new realm of possibility;

an eternal present in which we can know that what seems lost to the past isn't;

that the past, present, and future have met and will meet in Christ's resurrection.

Indeed, what is the Resurrection we celebrate today?

Is it only Christ's, the one from about 30 AD, the one remembered in the Gospels?

Or is it the great one promised in the future, when we who have died with him in baptism,

having died in the flesh, find ourselves raised in the body with him,

the great and general resurrection we speak of in the Creeds?

Is the day of Resurrection about which we sing one that is behind us,

or the one ahead of us,

or is it this holy day we mark once a year?

The answer is “yes!”, for the raising of Christ has undone our sense of what the passing of time means.

Speaking naturally, death is the great thing that marks the past; the past is populated by the dead; the future is the realm of those not yet born.

The present is those young and old, alive right now.

But in his resurrection, we have been born to eternal life; a resurrection 2000 years old, ever new, and still to come.

We are a people then, set free from nostalgia, liberated from regret, living in a new age of Resurrection, in which the life of God, a life not to be trifled with, a life that cannot be thwarted, cannot be extinguished,

the life that is the universe’s ultimate goal, has already erupted among us.

To be deeply aware that we live in such an age is the goal of the Christian life.

When we know it, we can let go of Jesus’ feet, pull our tear stained faces away from his shoulder, and follow him into the fullness of Kingdom life that he means to share with all of us.