

GOD CAN
Sermon for Easter Vigil A- Mt 28:1-10
LPC, 4/19/14

Some of us, if we were taught to pray when we were very young, started out by praying for things we wanted: a particular toy for Christmas or something like that. If our parents heard us doing this, we were probably told that this was the “wrong” way to pray, and that we were only supposed to take to God the *really important* things. So we started praying, for example, that it wouldn’t rain our birthday. Gradually we may have moved on to praying that people we love would get better from their illnesses. In all of these cases we probably had plenty of experience in not getting what we prayed for.

There are two reactions to this realization: you can give up on prayer, reasoning that it doesn’t work, or you can modify your way of praying and your expectations of prayer. This can mean that you try to pray only for things that are possible, or even likely.

The problem with this is that we train ourselves not to believe in miracles. Frankly, in teaching ourselves to pray the “right” way we get into the habit of expecting too little from God. Paradoxically, by acknowledging that God is too big to be concerned with our piffling concerns, we make God too small. And we settle for the way things are.

We come to figure that certain things are inevitable, like war, hunger, abuse, disease, exploitation, poverty, injustice, dishonesty. Even Jesus said, “The poor you have always with you.” We may wag our heads in sorrow, but we figure the problems are too big for us, since they’re obviously too big for God. We let ourselves off the hook and we let God off the hook.

Guess what? God does not want to let off the hook.

In a way, that’s what this whole Jesus thing is about. On the cross, God voluntarily puts himself literally on the hook. And then, God rises again to show that God really is more powerful than all the evil in the world: more powerful than death itself, the one incontrovertible truth in the world. And God controverts it. Cool, huh?

All that stuff that we’ve gotten in the habit of considering impossible, like world peace, or overcoming hunger, poverty, disease and exploitation, is in fact real and possible and indeed is inevitable with Christ’s Easter triumph.

Jesus’ resurrection means infinite possibilities for beauty and truth and love despite “real world” platitudes. Jesus’ triumph over death means that no evil is so great that goodness will not ultimately prevail. Jesus means that no matter how badly we screw up, on either a personal or cosmic level, there is hope for us. As Dame Julian would say, “All will be well, and all will be well and all manner of thing shall be well.”

Easter means that we are not only free from death but free from all those deadly assumptions, like the one that we can’t do anything about the ills of the world.

The Very Rev. Cynthia Byers Walter

Well, actually, to be realistic, we probably can't do anything about the ills of the world. But God can.

This is the God who created the universe. This is the God who parted the sea. This is the God who saved creation from the flood. This is the God who restores purity to the hopelessly unclean, this is the God who gives life even to desiccated carcasses.

This is the God who rises from the dead, and raises us too, not only from literal death, but from all those deadly assumptions about what we can't do. If we cooperate with God's kingdom we can be part of the whole world-transforming miracle begun in creation and sealed in Jesus Christ. We can because God is the God who can. And did. And does.

Alleluia.