

The Great Feast of Easter
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas
20 April 2025

Luke 24:1-12

The stages were set. The large stadium-size arena had been transformed into a concert hall for this annual event that would draw thousands of people from all over the world. Hundreds of qualifying events had taken place in each participating country and only the best of the best were invited to represent their country. Shirts were printed, tickets were sold, concessions laid waiting the hungry crowds, and soon enough, people from all over the world began filling the arena and local hotels. This year the event would be livestreamed to millions of people around the globe in real time, so the anxiety was high for the organizers and the performers. At stake was much more than pride of place for Finland, the host country this year. What was really at stake was the very ideology, the philosophy of the organizers. For the event to be successful it had to unite people from all over the world. The organizers believe that this event and others like it could finally bring world peace to this beleaguered planet. After an arduous day of competitions, the title of World Champion was given to Zachary Knowles, the first Canadian ever to win the price. By now you may be wondering what this great event was. It was none other than the 2024 International Air Guitar Championships in Oulu, Finland. Congratulations to Canada we rejoice in this great accomplishment. Good for you!

The Air Guitar games are dedicated to world peace. According to the ideology of the Air Guitar Championships, wars would end, and all evil would disappear from the face of the earth if all the people in the world played air guitar. I think it is a fascinating concept. Air guitar can bring world peace, after all, there is no real need for competition because you cannot play worse or better than anyone else, there is no distinction between rich and poor because you don't even need a real guitar, there is no distinctions based on race, color, socio-economic status, gender or age. Anyone can master the art of Air Guitar playing. It might even be good for your health!

I have been following this international competition for the last ten years and I always wonder, "Could there be an event so unprecedented that it could unite the world in ways the world has not been united before?" I believe there is, and we are

celebrating such an event today. The great celebration of Easter is a celebration of all that is good, all that is true, and all that is beautiful. Today, we celebrate the most perfect event in the history of the world. Jesus Christ, our Messiah has been risen from the dead. He is the fullest manifestation of God's love for humanity. He is God's "I love you" message to the world. He is the perfect gift that can transform the human heart, that can give life to our mortal, jaded, resentful, and bitter bodies. He is the only tonic that brings health to the human spirit and can heal what ails us. In him there is restoration, resurrection, and new life.

In a wonderful play by Eugene O'Neill called "Lazarus Laughed" we see Lazarus burning at the stake on orders of the emperor Caligula. At some point the crowds cry out to Lazarus, "What is beyond?" To which Lazarus exclaims, "Life! Eternity! Starts and dust! God's Eternal Laughter!" And the Chorus shouts, "Laugh! Laugh! Fear is no more! Death is dead!" ([Reference](#)) Death is dead! Christ has conquered death conclusively and forever. We who believe in him have now an alternative to fear of death, and alternative to existential anxiety, and that alternative is hope. There are no chains that can truly bind you now, in Christ risen there is absolute freedom.

Unfortunately, many of us Christians still believe that this life is all there is. Many of us still believe that the purpose of this life is endless personal enjoyment, the satisfaction of all our needs and wants, and the attainment of material goods, and earthly desires. Because many of us don't fully believe that in Christ there is a future beyond this earth, our hearts are filled with hopelessness. We feel we have to do it all here, this is all there is, it is either now or never.

Since this life is all there is, then we must get all of our kicks here and now, we say. Because there are no second chances, we must get what we want, when we want it, and in sufficient quantities. But I am here to tell you that death is dead and there is life that await us all. For those who love Christ there is a wonderful future that awaits us, and that future begins here on this earth. That Kingdom of God for which we long is already among us, is here in our world. The God of new life is here in our midst, doing something new in us, creating new hearts in us, restoring us to a proper relationship with him through the death and resurrection of his son.

What a wonderful place this earth would be if all of us lived like children of the light, if all of us lived resurrection lives, if we let God's peace and grace fill our

hearts with joy and laughter. How much different would this world be if we allowed our imaginations to soar, our creativity to spill over into our lives, our joy to overwhelm us. Christ is risen and this means freedom for all of us. We are no longer bound by our sin and misery. We are no longer limited by our brokenness, we are no longer the victims of past hurts and resentments, but we are renewed creatures into whom God has breathed new life.

But, let me acknowledge that this has been a bad year for organized religion. We have seen scandals in some of the main-line denominations, we have seen average Sunday attendance to church drop all over the world, and we have seen the almost unstoppable spread of secularism across Europe and many other parts of the world. Many of us are here today seeking depth, seeking meaning, seeking a loving family, but even as you hope that God may be calling you back into the fold, you remain skeptical about priests and pastors, and you remain suspicious about organized religion. If this is where you are, let me remind you that Christianity is much more than an organized religion. Christianity is a relationship with a person and that person is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whose victory over death we celebrate today. Christianity is about developing a life-saving relationship with him, and not just about memorizing formulas and prayers.

If your life is perfect and you haven't encountered pain, betrayal, suffering or loss then perhaps this Jesus is not for you. But, if like many of us, you are in pain, you have suffered the crushing loss of a loved one, and you are searching for meaning and a purpose, then this Jesus is for you. He longs to have a relationship with you, he longs to give you freedom from self-doubt and insecurity, freedom from addiction and co-dependance, freedom from bitterness and regrets.

Return to this Jesus of Nazareth today because only in him you can find forgiveness and unconditional acceptance. Return to this Jesus today because only in him can you find victory and eternal life. Return to him because only in him can you find a hope for a new day when tomorrow comes.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

All: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

