



Anglican Network in Canada

Office of the Diocesan Bishop
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31 March 2015

An EASTER GREETING to be read or distributed in every ANiC congregation for Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015

My dear brothers and sisters of the Anglican Network in Canada,

It is my great joy and honour to greet you this Easter on behalf of Bishop Stephen and his wife Nona, Bishop Trevor and his wife Dede, Bishop Don and his wife Trudy, Bishop Ron and his wife Jan, Bishop Malcolm and his wife Mary Lou and on behalf of myself and my dear wife Judy.

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

The Lord is risen, he is risen indeed, Alleluia!

It is our prayer for you all that you would grow in the wonder and power of the cross of Christ more and more, and in the joy and assurance of the resurrection of Jesus more and more. And in response to this glorious gospel live lives which are consistent with and bold expressions that Jesus died and rose again.

We love you all very much. We pray for you regularly and we are deeply honoured to be partners with you in this wonderful gospel.

For this Easter I have been pondering the Apostle Paul’s majestic chapter on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15. In verses 1 and 2, he writes: *“now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain.”* What has been striking me, and what I would share with you this Easter, are three very simple truths: 1) It really happened; 2) It matters that it happened; and 3) It’s meant to have a huge impact on our lives and therefore the world in which we live.

It really happened

Paul is clear that Jesus really did die. *“For I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried...”* (verses 3 and 4a) This is certainly what the gospel writers wanted us to understand as well. John reported in John 19, *“But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and*

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he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe.” In saying this, he is of course remembering Zechariah 12:10's prophecy, but also acknowledging that water and blood is proof that he really was already dead. That Jesus, the pure son of God without sin actually died is to be what we believe, and for us who believe it is our salvation. “He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

He not only really died but on the third day he really rose from the dead. In first Corinthians 15 versus 4b through 11, Paul gives a list of some of those who witnessed the risen Lord Jesus: Peter whom he calls Cephas, the twelve, 500 at one time most of whom he says were still alive when he wrote, James, and then on the Damascus road, Saul of Tarsus, that is Paul himself.

It is clear the gospel writers and the rest the New Testament writers all are giving testimony to the fact that Jesus literally, historically died and really rose again and that our faith in the gospel message which we believe is dependent on the fact that he really did die and really did rise again.

It really matters

It is this simple message which Paul says he and they received, and were now simply, but clearly and boldly, proclaiming, because for those who receive it and believe it, it is their very salvation.

That it really happened Paul says is a matter of great importance. In fact, he said, if it hadn't happened, we are truly the most to be pitied. *“And if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* (1 Corinthians 15 verses 14-19).

But Paul says, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (verse 20)

It's meant to have a huge impact on our lives and therefore on the world in which we live

Speaking of our resurrection bodies, which Paul wants us who are in Christ to anticipate with great joy because Jesus has risen from the dead, he says: *“...so is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body.”* (verses 42-44)

Knowing that death has been dealt with, for all time, in the resurrection of Jesus, Paul declares in the strongest of terms the defeat of death and the emptying of its power. *“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come*

to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (verses 54, 55)

Knowing our great enemy has been defeated and knowing that Jesus has risen from the dead – He who is Lord and King, the one to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess him as Lord – is meant to change everything in our lives. Now, instead of living fearfully under the bondage of sin and Satan and death, we now are able to live joyfully and powerfully under the power of the cross and the resurrection. We now are released to live new, holy lives, steadfast in ministry and proclaiming his good news to a world that so desperately needs to hear it.

I love it that Paul ends this great chapter, as I end this greeting, with an extra exhortation to live and minister extravagantly and boldly: *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."* (verse 58)

Alleluia! Let's do this because He is risen from the dead!

Easter blessings to you all!

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