

Easter Sunday March 27, 2016

Collect: Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Lesson: Isaiah 65:17-25 read from the International Children's Bible

“Look, I will make new heavens and a new earth. And people will not remember the past. They will not think about those things. My people will be happy forever because of the things I will make. I will make a Jerusalem that is full of joy. And I will make her people a delight. Then I will rejoice over Jerusalem. I will be delighted with my people. There will never again be crying and sadness in that city. There will never be a baby from that city who lives only a few days. And there will never be an older person who doesn't have a long life. A person who lives 100 years will be called young. And the person who dies before he is 100 will be thought of as a sinner. In that city the person who builds a house will live there. The person who plants vineyards will get to eat grapes. No more will one person build a house and someone else live there. One person will not plant a garden and someone else eat its fruit. My people will live a long time as trees live long. My chosen people will live there and enjoy the things they make. People will never again work for nothing. They will never again give birth to children who die young. All my people will be blessed by the Lord. My people and their children will be blessed. I will provide for their needs before they ask. I will help them while they are still asking for help. Wolves and lambs will eat together in peace. Lions will eat hay like oxen. A snake on the ground will not hurt anyone. They will not hurt or destroy each other on all my holy mountain,” says the Lord.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm:118:1-2, 14-24 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; * his mercy endures for ever.

2 Let Israel now proclaim, * “His mercy endures for ever.”

14 The Lord is my strength and my song, * and he has become my salvation.

15 There is a sound of exultation and victory * in the tents of the righteous:

16 “The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! * the right hand of the Lord is exalted! the right hand of the Lord has triumphed!”

17 I shall not die, but live, * and declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has punished me sorely, * but he did not hand me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; * I will enter them; I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 “This is the gate of the Lord; * he who is righteous may enter.”

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me * and have become my salvation.

22 The same stone which the builders rejected * has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord’s doing, * and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 On this day the Lord has acted; * we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Second Lesson: Acts 10:34-43 read from the Lexham English Bible

So Peter opened his mouth and said, “In truth I understand that God is not one who shows partiality, but in every nation the one who fears him and who does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the message that he sent to the sons of Israel, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—this one is Lord of all - you know the thing that happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed: Jesus of Nazareth—how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him. And we are witnesses of all the things that he did both in the land of the Judeans and in Jerusalem, whom they also executed by hanging him on a tree. God raised this one up on the third day and granted that he should become visible, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen beforehand by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify solemnly that this one is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and of the dead. To this one all the prophets testify, that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.”

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: John 20:1-18 read from the Message Bible

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance. She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, breathlessly panting, "They took the Master from the tomb. We don't know where they've put him."

Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb. They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter. Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there, and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself. Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed. No one yet knew from the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead. The disciples then went back home.

But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid. They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?"

"They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?"

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On March 28 we celebrate the life of Rev. James Solomon Russell priest and educator.

Russell was born into slavery in Mecklenburg County and was probably the only child of Solomon Russell and Araminta Russell. His father lived on a plantation across the border in neighboring Warren County, North Carolina, where the family reunited after the war.

Russell rose to become one of the most prominent African American pastors in the post-Civil War South. As a minister, educator, and founder of Saint Paul's College which began as a one-room parochial school in Lawrenceville, Virginia. He played a major role in the development of educational access for former slaves in the South and within the Episcopal Church from the end of Radical Reconstruction to the early 20th century.

St. Paul's Normal and Industrial School was founded on Sept. 24, 1888, by Rev. Russell. In 1906 it became a part of the American Church Institute for Negroes. While the curriculum explored the basics, the students were enthusiastic. On Dec. 30, 1941, the name was changed to St. Paul's Polytechnic Institute, and in 1945 awarded its first bachelor's degrees. On Feb. 27, 1957, the name was again changed to St. Paul's College. Today St. Paul's is a four-year, historically African American college, and is a member of the Association of Episcopal Colleges.

Russell was Elected suffragan bishop of the Diocese of Arkansas in 1917 and offered the position of suffragan bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina in 1918, he declined both, stating that his work as head of Saint Paul's school was too important.

Russell died in Lawrenceville on March 28, 1935, and was buried next to his wife, in Saint Paul's cemetery located near the school.

Let us pray: Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom: Enlighten by your Holy Spirit those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship you and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**