

Bruton Parish Episcopal Church
The Rev. Josh Stephens
Bruton Parish Church
Easter Sunday 2019

Happy Easter! Welcome to the Eighth day of creation. In Genesis, we read of God creating a good world in seven days but we also read about our turn away from God. On Easter, we learn about the change God is bringing to us—the new creation that comes with even death being defeated. We call this the Eighth day of creation because the world is re-made when Christ breaks the bondage of sin and death.

Last night, only about eight hours ago, we baptized a new adult in that eight-sided font just down there. He was buried with Christ in his death and raised with him in his resurrection on this Eighth day. This new creation of an Easter world fills our hearts and souls, our church and homes. It spreads from sea to mountains, from the tropics to the artic, from the microscopic to the cosmic. Indeed, God is making all things new with Easter and doing so uniquely with you and me in mind. We ask with joy and wonder this day, if there is any limit to the love of God.

The problem is that we live most of our lives in a fog of fear so that we cannot see clearly the love which surrounds us. In our Easter Gospel readings, these faithful women show up to the tomb to carry-out their rituals of grieving. Their grief transforms to fear, as is often the case for those of us who grieve. For these women, they become scared when they encounter an empty tomb and a messenger of resurrection. The scriptures say they were terrified.

We shouldn't be surprised about their fear. Most of us live our lives in a fog of fear: fear of what we've become, fear of what could be, fear of loss, fear of what we do not know or those we do not understand, fear of our past coming back to get us, fear of what the future could hold, fear of not being enough, and it goes on and on. It's a fog of fear that surrounds us much of the time.

The disciples were certainly knowing that all-consuming fear after Jesus was crucified. They scattered to the winds in fear, the texts seem to say. I think most of

us live our lives that way: stuck between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, on that Saturday which we've claimed to be Holy, but actually it was a day of crippling fear. Most of us live our lives stuck right there between death and resurrection, between the old life and something new, living in a fog of fear.

It's no wonder that when a messenger from God graces the pages of scripture, the first thing that messenger says is, "Don't be afraid." You don't have to be afraid of whether you're enough anymore: Christ is Risen! You don't have to be afraid of your past anymore: Christ is Risen! You don't have to be afraid of what is ahead anymore: Christ is Risen! The fog is lifting this Easter Day. The warm Son light of resurrection is burning off the fear. We don't have to be afraid anymore.

It's no wonder in the Epistle of 1 John, that when talking about the opposite of love, the author doesn't contrast love with hate. He doesn't say that the opposite of love is hate. No, he says that it's the perfect love of God that drives out all fear. Hate is simply a byproduct of fear, my friends, and the Good Physician has prescribed us an Easter remedy to our illness of body and soul.

The love of God is driving out our fear this Easter Day. The fog is lifting. You and me—the entire world—it's all being recreated. This is the 8th day of creation when Adam and Eve are pulled from their tombs. This is Easter. Fear and death, those adulterous lovers of our despair, have been defeated. May the Alleluias ring from our lips. The fog has lifted and we trust in God this day, because if God can overcome death, then our fears don't have a chance in God's world. This is a world where the wolf and lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox. This is the world where Christ is Risen and we don't have to be afraid.