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YEARS A, B, AND C

Hopeful

Meditations

*for
Every Day
of Easter
Through
Pentecost*

Rev. Warren J. Savage



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Monday of the Octave of Easter

Acts 2:14, 22–33

Psalm 16:1–2a and 5, 7–8, 9–10, 11

Matthew 28:8–15

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

MATTHEW 28:8–10

Reflection: Our imagination is a powerful tool to find meaning in the gospels. Our imagination allows us to become part of this story. We can see ourselves going to the tomb of Jesus, and once we arrive, something incredible happens. A messenger appears and tells us that Jesus is raised from the dead. The messenger tells us to go and tell the disciples, but on the way we encounter the risen Jesus. Our first instinct is to embrace him with deep love, reverence, and respect. Jesus then instructs us to go and tell his brothers the good news: that he is alive.

Our imagination allows us to experience the joy and excitement surrounding the resurrection of Jesus. Our imagination also opens up a way for us to understand what it means to be a Christian witness in the world today. When we prayerfully read the Word of God, take time to appreciate the beauty of creation, show respect for others, and respond to people's needs, the resurrection becomes real in our lives. The story of the resurrection makes us eager to tell others about our experience of the risen Lord in our lives.

Perhaps we have mixed feelings about our faith. Perhaps telling others about the risen Jesus fills us with fear and great joy. We do not have to be afraid. With the help of the Holy Spirit and empowered by the resurrection of Jesus, we can be God's messengers of hope, compassion, peace, and reconciliation.

Ponder: Why am I afraid to share my faith with others?

Prayer: Risen Lord, your life-giving presence gives me hope, strength, and peace. Help me to be your witness of love and compassion in the presence of others.

Practice: Today I will look at people and greet them with respect and reverence.

Tuesday of the Octave of Easter

Acts 2:36–41

Psalm 33:4–5, 18–19, 20 and 22

John 20:11–18

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord.”

JOHN 20:18

Reflection: From grief to joy, from despair to hope, from turmoil to peace, from loneliness to feeling loved. When we recognize the resurrected Jesus, we are transformed. Our very lives carry a message of love, peace, hope, and joy to others.

Before we reach this state of transformation, however, we spend a lot of time searching for our meaning and purpose, for support and encouragement, for the assurance that we are loved and needed. We often tend to search outside ourselves: at work, in our faith community, in our support groups, with our friends and relatives. Yet the real search happens inside the tomb of our inner self. Inside this tomb we have buried our innate wisdom, our intimate knowledge of God, our sense of self-worth, and our power to love and heal others and ourselves.

Our inner truth is often buried beneath layers of habitual mindsets and behaviors that drain us of positive energy: needing to be in control, wanting to be perfect, being disdainful and suspicious of those who are different, being afraid to speak out against injustice and violence, holding on to our possessions instead of sharing them with those in need.

Sifting through the debris in our innermost tombs is an adventure to which God calls us every day. We are called to know our true nature as children of God, to feel God's love in our lives and hearts, and to accept that God made us in love, for love. We are called to empty our tombs so that we have space for God to fill us with the gifts of hope, joy, peace, and love. Then our lives will announce God's goodness and kindness in the world.

Ponder: What do I need to clear out of my tomb?

Prayer: Risen Lord, you are my help and my hope. Give me the courage to empty myself of all that prevents me from knowing your goodness and kindness.

Practice: Today I will clean out a cluttered area of my home.

Wednesday of the Octave of Easter

Acts 3:1–10

Psalm 105:1–2, 3–4, 6–7, 8–9

Luke 24:13–35

But Peter said, “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.”

ACTS 3:6

Reflection: Most of us think that if we had lots of money, we’d be freer, more powerful, more able to help in the world. We imagine all the good we could do if we were to win the lottery. We’d give a big donation to the Church, pay off someone’s loans, or take the time to relax and enjoy life. We live in a state of delusion and frustrated expectation because we have put our hope in money instead of in God.

God is more powerful than money. And so are we. Without any silver or gold, Peter heals the man who was lame by aligning his own power of compassion with the healing power of Jesus. We don’t need money to let our power of love and faith transform the world. We just need to use what we

already have to help others experience the love and healing forgiveness of God.

Maybe we have the gift of hospitality. We can heal the wound of loneliness by inviting others to sit at our table.

Maybe we have the gift of patience. We can heal the wound of discouragement by staying positive even in the face of pain, illness, and adversity.

Maybe we have the gift of laughter. We can heal the wound of bitterness by finding the humor in the events of our daily lives.

God asks each of us to give what we have in the moment. God asks us to rejoice in our gifts and talents and to use them to serve others. God asks us to trust more in God's power of love than in silver or gold.

Ponder: What do I have to give to others?

Prayer: Risen Lord, you are glorious and good. Help me to seek the transforming power of your love and forgiveness.

Practice: Today I will make a list of the gifts I have and use one of them to help someone in need.

Thursday of the Octave of Easter

Acts 3:11–26

Psalm 8:2ab and 5, 6–7, 8–9

Luke 24:35–48

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, [Jesus] said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

LUKE 24:41–43

Reflection: Simple joy can be found in sharing food with others. Eating is essential to the human condition. Food is vital to our health.

Some people love food and have easy access to it. They love the flavors and textures food provides. They love fresh-baked bread, cookies, and pastries. They love meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, and exotic foods. They love sampling dishes from other parts of the world. They love the way food makes them feel. They love the joy and excitement associated with eating good food.

Some people love food but can't afford to buy enough of it. Some feel ashamed of being hungry. Some don't ask for help for fear of being judged or

rejected. In a society of plenty, some people have difficulty getting enough to eat. They don't have the opportunity to experience the simple joy of eating with others.

In a world of abundant food, thousands of people are starving. Starvation means muscles are atrophying, bones are becoming desiccated, systems are shutting down, the brain is struggling to function, and death is painfully encroaching. Starvation happens because those with an abundance of food do not share with those who don't have enough. Greed and indifference are effectively killing millions of God's children.

Fed by God's Word, we are compelled to share our food with our brothers and sisters who do not have enough to eat. We give hope to the poor when we do all we can to eradicate hunger in our world.

Ponder: What does food and eating mean to me?

Prayer: Risen Lord, you know our human needs. Show me how to feed my sisters and brothers who have no food.

Practice: Today I will donate food to an organization that will distribute it to those who are starving.

Friday of the Octave of Easter

Acts 4:1–12

Psalm 118:1–2 and 4, 22–24, 25–27a

John 21:1–14

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

JOHN 21:9

Reflection: Jesus has a welcoming fire going and a meal cooking for the hungry, hard-working fishermen. He knows his followers need comfort, attention, a good meal, fellowship, and a chance to relax in the presence of God. Jesus has a gift for intimacy. He cherishes every opportunity to spend time with people, getting to know them, listening to their problems, enjoying their companionship, finding ways to touch their hearts, giving them the chance to grow closer to him.

As we grow in the likeness of God, we learn to search out occasions for intimacy with others. We take notice of the people around us and offer them encouragement. We look for ways to ease others' burdens. We take the time to learn about others' likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, hopes and dreams. We share our own experiences

and problems, trusting others with a glimpse of our human vulnerability. We make opportunities to call, write, or visit. We let others know we care about them. We give hope to others when we reassure them that they are not alone.

As we spend time in intimate connection with others, we learn more about ourselves. We discover our levels of intolerance. We notice how difficult it is to listen without interrupting. We practice patience, nonjudgment, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion. We let go of our rigid sense of right and wrong. We learn to see ourselves in others: fragile people who want to feel loved and welcome.

Intimacy is an opportunity to develop our trust in God's living presence and a reminder of how close the risen Lord is to each of us.

Ponder: What fears inhibit me from being close to others?

Prayer: Risen Lord, your love unites the whole world. May your light teach me how to open my heart to the love of others.

Practice: Today I will invite someone to have a cup of tea with me.

Saturday of the Octave of Easter

Acts 4:13–21

Psalm 118:1 and 14–15ab, 16–18, 19–21

Mark 16:9–15

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.

ACTS 4:13

Reflection: There is a trend in our world to impose uniformity on all people, to impose a kind of norm that precludes cultural differences, personal creativity, and individual quirkiness. Jesus, however, is forever countercultural and speaks and acts through the most unexpected of us.

We don't have to be ordained priests, biblical scholars, or trained theologians to be able to express the love of God in the world. We don't need a college degree, an executive position, or a famous name to be able to transform our world by our faith in Jesus.

Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary levels of service. Jesus sees into our hearts and knows we want to help those who are alone, ill,

anxious, or despairing. Jesus places his mission of love and peace into our hands—ordinary, work-hardened, callused, and arthritic hands. We don't need manicures to be able to reach out and offer a loving hand to others. All we need is a desire to follow the will of God and the humility to ask God to show us what to do.

Our faith in Jesus gives us the power to make a difference in the world. Our faith in Jesus gives us the right words to speak at the right moment. Our faith in Jesus takes away our fear of deviating from a societal norm. Our faith in Jesus reminds us that we are called to make good use of our particular gifts and talents to help others. Our faith in Jesus helps us shine the light of hope and love in our corner of the universe.

Ponder: Whose faith amazes me?

Prayer: Risen Lord, you are our hope. Guide me in your ways that I may never be shy about speaking your words of love and peace.

Practice: Today I will volunteer to help with an adult-literacy program.

Second Sunday of Easter

YEAR A

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When [Jesus] had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

JOHN 20:21-23

Reflection: We need to be aware of the way we approach people. When we ignore people, they may feel disrespected or rejected. When we don't take time to listen to others, they may feel insignificant or unimportant. When we are angry and upset at people, they may feel abused or hurt. When we are impatient and frustrated with others, they may feel misunderstood or incompetent. When we are indifferent toward others, they may feel disheartened or discouraged.

After the resurrection, the first lesson Jesus teaches his disciples and us is how to approach people and life in general. He teaches us to approach our brothers and sisters with an attitude of peace. He shows us that God's peace does not violate or wound the dignity of others. God's peace has the power to remove the walls of fear, prejudice, and hatred of others. God's peace opens a pathway to mutual love and understanding.

In his person, the risen Jesus demonstrates embodied peace as a new way of living in the world. When we can approach humanity and creation with an embodied sense of peace and respect, we help to heal relationships among people and restore balance and harmony in the world. We have been given the Spirit of God and empowered to share forgiveness, the fruit of the resurrection. One of the greatest challenges of the Christian life is learning how to be a more authentic witness of the peace and forgiveness of God toward all people.

Ponder: How do I approach people throughout the day?

Prayer: Risen Lord, you share with me God's gifts of peace and forgiveness. Open my heart to share your peace and forgiveness with all people.

Practice: Today I will approach everyone in a kind and gentle manner.

YEAR B

Acts 4:32–35

Psalm 118:2–4, 13–15, 22–24

1 John 5:1–6

John 20:19–31

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

ACTS 4:33

Reflection: We have been told on more than one occasion that our actions speak louder than our words. The way we act in life gives testimony to what we believe and hold dear in our hearts.

It is hard to convince others to respond to the needs of the poor if we are not involved in a project that prepares a meal and feeds the poor. No one will care to listen to us about visiting the sick and lonely when we have not made the effort to visit a hospital or nursing home. It is difficult to get others to advocate for peace and justice when we have not resolved our personal conflicts with others. We cannot preach to others about the love of God when we harbor hatred and prejudice in our hearts.

After the resurrection, the followers of Christ had to ensure that their preaching matched their

attitude and behavior. Preaching about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus required a new way of thinking and a new way of living. Belief in the resurrection challenged the followers of Christ to reflect on his life and ministry. They honored Jesus' teachings by following his example of reaching out to the poor, the rejected, the sick, and the lame. Their lives had to resemble the life of Christ, who came to bring God's compassion, love, peace, and forgiveness to all people.

Our actions, born out of faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, have the power to change people's minds and hearts. People will know the love of God when we show love. People will know the mercy of God when we offer forgiveness. People will know the goodness of God when we are good to others.

Ponder: How often do my actions match my words?

Prayer: Risen Lord, you fulfilled your promise by rising from the dead. Help me to practice what I preach.

Practice: Today I will do more and speak less.

YEAR C

Acts 5:12–16

Psalms 118:2–4, 13–15, 22–24

Revelation 1:9–11a, 12–13, 17–19

John 20:19–31

**Now many signs and wonders were done
among the people through the apostles.**

ACTS 5:12

Reflection: Many signs and wonders are being performed by compassionate people in quiet and humble ways. We see people from all walks of life making a difference in the world every day. We see people in our community working together to build a home for a needy family. We see people working together to cook a meal to feed the hungry at a local soup kitchen. We see people working together to collect canned goods for a local food pantry. We see people working together to secure shelter for the homeless.

We see people from all over the world working together to rebuild communities devastated by earthquakes and hurricanes. We see people working together in poor countries to care for mothers and their children with AIDS. We see people working together to bring food and water to refu-

gees affected by severe famine and drought. We see people of goodwill working together to protect the sacredness of life, to uphold the dignity of others, to promote human rights, to eradicate racism, violence, and human trafficking.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he gave his followers the power to work miracles—signs and wonders—among the people. Our belief in the resurrection is a statement of our willingness to allow the risen Lord to continue to work the signs and wonders of God through us. Empowered by our faith in the resurrection and inspired by the good works of so many good people around us, we are called to perform signs and wonders that help to rebuild people's lives, restore hope, and bring about peace.

Ponder: What signs and wonders have I done to help others?

Prayer: Risen Lord, your resurrection renewed the face of the earth and gave us hope. Make me eager to use my gifts and talents to rebuild people's lives and give them hope.

Practice: Today I will perform a small sign and wonder for someone in need.