

Sermon: An Easter People en Route**Scripture: John 14:1-14****PReacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: April 29, 2026**

Our theme for this morning in both worship and for our annual meeting after worship is “We are an Easter people in a Good Friday world.” It’s a phrase that’s been attributed to St Augustine and it suggests that we who place Christ at the center of our faith and our lives, we who have been baptized into the sacred waters with the great Trinitarian formula pronounced over us (as we will soon do for Connor), we who gather at the table that we call The Lord’s Supper, we have a particular orientation in this world, an Easter orientation. It’s an Easter orientation in a Good Friday world, which doesn’t deny goodness and beauty in the world but faces squarely, truthfully and humbly that this world is rife with violence and suffering, a world of convenient lies and inconvenient truths, a world of immense wealth set alongside immense need, one that tends to silence those who most need to be heard. It’s a world of decay and death, really, all of which is what is meant by “a Good Friday world”. A world that would crucify the embodiment of love.

We, as those who tend the Christ flame and follow the Jesus way, are and must strive to become ever more a different kind of people in this Good Friday world. It’s right there in his example and on his cross and in what happens after his resurrection, that is our blueprint. We don’t have to make it up. Jesus is treated with cruelty and violence and he returns forgiveness and grace. An Easter people is a people who work at forgiveness. It’s not easy or convenient at times but an Easter people commits to be a forgiving

people and when it's inevitably hard they remember their Lord saying, try it 70 times 7 before giving it up.

Jesus throughout his public life had his eye and heart particularly on the lost, the last, the losers, the least. The eyes and ears of our society are trained on the most impressive, the uber popular, the particularly powerful, the exceptionally wealthy. But an Easter people pays attention, along with Jesus, as Jesus, to the overlooked, the unnoticed, the disregarded, the scorned and dismissed.

An Easter people also are those who turn towards God time and time again, as Jesus did. It doesn't mean that they always see God and feel God's presence or hear an answer to their call. Even Jesus, as unified as he was with the Great Creator, wondered at times where God was, if he was being heard. But he kept turning there and turning back and turning back there again, handing himself back to God, trusting his life to God. And so Easter people do that. They turn once again back to God, They turn to God first and in the midst of all they encounter and finally at the last, trusting that God can make a way out of no way, that not only are all things possible with God but even the impossible with God is possible.

It doesn't mean things go our way if we turn to God enough. It means that whatever way things go and they go all sorts of ways, we've got a companion God loving us through the peaks and valleys and troughs and obstacles and the impossibilities, through it all. We are tempted towards "functional atheism" as Parker Palmer described it, to be those who profess a belief in God but live as if it's all up to us anyway. But an Easter people operate in this world knowing and trusting that ultimately God is in charge and they regularly listen for God and aim to be led, guided, determined by God's Holy Spirit. We live our lives differently, we run our homes and

churches differently from other homes and other non-profits, because we are an Easter people and God is the boss, not us, not anyone else no matter how great and powerful they think they are, but God. God's the boss man, the head hauncho, the jefe, the kingpin, the great CEO and Easter people defer to God above all.

And to be an Easter people, means that when we gather at the bedside of the dying and when we face small and large endings and deaths in our lives, we are not a people without hope. It doesn't mean we are shiny happy people. It doesn't mean we aren't terribly sad at our losses, but the tragedy of death is tempered, shot through, dissipated by God's promise of life and love's victory. I often use a line phrase from poet laureate Rabindranthan Tagore at funeral services where he writes: "Death is not extinguishing the light, it is only turning out the lamp for the dawn has come." An Easter person is like Julianne Zimmerman who this week sat beside her mom as she engaged in the tough work of dying and when her mom finally passed on Wednesday morning, Julianne said "I am very sad but also relieved and grateful". An Easter people aren't spared of great sorrow but it is tempered with relief and gratitude that in the end, the end is held by a God of love and love makes a beginning out of every ending.

Easter people are not a people about death but a people who are about life. They are not a people who ignore the present for some future promise but are those for whom the present blooms and becomes more alive. It's right there in our passage that Jen read for us this morning from the Gospel of John where Jesus is saying his goodbyes to his beloved disciples and they are having a hard time with the thought of him leaving. But he assures them. "I am going to prepare a place for you and you know the way to the place I am going" and Thomas says - "no, wait, we actually

have no idea where you are going, much less the way there.” And Jesus doesn’t say - “well, once you die you’ll know” or “when you die and you’ll get there.” He instead says “I am the way, Thomas. I am. By going my way you go to God.” And Philip chimes in, “ok just show us Abba God!” And Jesus says “Philip, you’ve been with me all this time, you’ve seen and known Abba-God through me.” And then he talks to them about how God and He in God through the Spirit is the way, the way home, the truth that they seek.

An Easter people are a people en route to God not just when they die in the afterlife, but more immediately in the meantime. There is a quality of life itself that is aligned to God, that is at home in God, it’s a realm a kingdom overlaying or underlying this world that is framed by forgiveness, love, grace, mercy, peace, justice, hope, dependence on God... “that is the place where I want you to go,” Jesus says, “a home within this place and you’ll bless the people around you by inviting them into that home, into that church, into that place of grace.” Welcome them. Baptize them. Bless them. That is the way. And that is the way we must go as an Easter People in this Good Friday world.