

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

Easter is still here ...and yet the news can make us question what difference it makes.

CNN tells us, *"That Starting on March 16, when eight people were killed at three Atlanta-area spas, the US has had at least 45 mass shootings, and 147 since the beginning of 2021."*

www.cnn.com/2021/04/16/us/mass-shootings-45-one-month/index.html?fbclid=IwAR2rzbikzFlaNCZRZrLxZw5EK8RPr0nvBBvs3ubLdNiB2ah5kabNqn4C3c0

Men, women, and children, mothers and fathers, families, unarmed black men, police officers, murdered, all in the first third of the year.

Sin is rampant. *"Sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people and with all of creation".* (BCP pg849)
Murder is perhaps the ultimate sin, the taking of a life that was given by God and belongs to God.

We all sin. We all violate some version of the 10 Commandments, and we all participate in a society in which people are hungry, homeless, denied medical care, abused, disrespected, and denied justice. We cannot get out of this mess by ourselves.

By the grace and mercy of God, by the grace and mercy of God, Jesus' death and resurrection has redeemed us. Redemption sets us free from the power of evil, sin, and death. This does not mean that bad things, evil things don't happen, but that they will not prevail. As Paul says in his letter to the Romans, *"We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's".* (Romans 14:7-8)

Redemption means that we are free to live fully in relationship with God and that being free to do so we are fulfilled when we do – no matter what happens. Freedom does not mean being free from obligations it means being free to chose life in Christ, *"to live in hope with confidence in newness and fullness of life, and to await the coming of Christ in glory, and the completion of God's purpose for the world."* (BCP pg 861)

Now back to Easter and why we continue to celebrate, to have hope even amid violence and death.

It's the resurrection, the bodily resurrection that makes all the difference. Jesus Christ rose again. He became the first to experience what has been promised to us, to be raised from the dead into the nearer presence of God. That's why John and Luke provide detailed descriptions of Jesus' resurrection appearance to his disciples.

The evangelists are very clear that the resurrected Jesus was not a disembodied spirit and that his physical appearance was different from his physical appearance in life. Jesus has not been brought back to life, he has been resurrected, he has been transformed. This is the proof that all that he said concerning the scripture and his relationship with his Father are true. Conversely, if there is no resurrection our faith is a nice hope, but it is not grounded in reality.

Without the resurrection Jesus' life and death were like those of any other prophet and martyr; he had an impact, he changed some lives but the world, creation itself was not changed by his living or his dying. The reality of our faith is that Jesus lived among us as a human being, he died and was buried, he rose again, and he ascended to the Father. The resurrection is the breaking forth of a new age when evil, sin and death have been defeated, no matter what happens in our individual lifetimes there is the confidence and the hope that in the end when Jesus comes again all will be made well.

We do not need to live in fear that our lives are without purpose or meaningless regardless of whether we have become rich or famous talented beyond all others, handsome, beautiful or anything else having to do with earthly accomplishment. If we live into the freedom given us in Christ we can rest in the knowledge and love of God, that we are children of God and heirs of Christ his son. Such a recognition banishes fear, redeems time, and helps us to become reconciled to the pain and disappointments that are an inevitable part of our human existence. We have been forgiven, no shame or guilt, no sin can keep us from the love of God forever - all because Jesus lived and died and rose again.

Alleluia, The Christ is risen!