

Devotionals: He is Risen!

He is risen indeed!



Section of the altar scene at St John the Evangelist Niagara Falls <https://www.stjohnsniagarafalls.ca/>

I believe.....On the third day he rose again from the dead.

I believe because of the accounts. Each writer may have written with a different perspective. Just as reporters write

different stories and may report different facts and add their own view point, today, so the writers chosen to give account in the gospels and letters of the Bible, share different details of their own witness and encounter with Christ.

I believe because of the difference in these accounts which add up to give personal testimony of an alive Christ working in spirit with the people of His new church.

I believe and enjoy that belief with thousands of others across the world. Some personal acquaintances, others online others in what I read and hear.

I believe because I choose to believe with all my heart. Even in the depth of tragedy, it is that belief that stirs me, not as a temporary crutch just to get me through, but with my whole body, mind and soul I believe. It is my beginning and end. It is at the core of all I do. I work at that belief and choose to believe because for me it is the right.

I believe because I want to join in the dance. I want to sing with joy, clap my hands with the rhythm and step out my life with those around me. I want to do this not with an outdated principal, or a written code or even an unwritten but shared custom handed down from generation. I want to dance with a living, vibrant, supportive partner, who understands the clumsy feet, the awkward body and the mistakes I make in this choreography we call life.

Let us join the dance together.

Lenten devotionals: Holy week Saturday

Continuing praying the creed

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

Yesterday, the day known as Good, or better perhaps, Good Friday (and we should remember that this is a man made name and does not appear in scripture), was a day to focus on the factual events. We dared to kneel before the cross and picture our Lord, nailed there. We grieved with his loved ones at the pain and agony his physical body must have endured. We bowed in gratitude for the redemption He offered us. We returned again to receive the grace extended and renewed our desire for Him. We left in contemplative silence.

Today, perhaps, like myself you have been busy with preparation. Special family time to organise, meals to prepare and service to community, family and friends.

I like to think of this day as a day of preparation and

reparation for the body and soul of Christ. In our human weakness it is difficult to grasp the aspect of death. When I recite these words within the creed, "He descended into Hell" what, actually am I affirming?

Having read several interpretations to what these particular words within the apostles creed might refer, I am stating here that they can be open to interpretation for each to study and decide for themselves. These,

for what they are worth, are my thoughts.

Jesus himself, in describing his death, likened it to Jonah in the body of the fish. During that time, Jonah was separated from God, receiving the judgement of God for his lack of faith. Jesus, as the sacrificial lamb atoning for our sin, needed to experience the horror of separation from God. The body was dead and buried, we believe that. Using these few words we affirm I believe the spirit, the word, of Christ also experienced a death by separation from God.

My understanding, also, is that the resurrected body of Christ, was changed. He told Mary not to hold him as He had not yet returned to his father, yet his body was recognisable to Thomas by the scars and wounds of the crucifixion. The spirit and body were separated for a time, the body remaining in the tomb, the spirit in another dimension, preparing for the victory over death. At such a time for us, our physical body will perish, but in the day of victory over death, we will be given a new body, eternal, spiritual and glorious. By speaking to each other these words, let us use a tone of rejoicing as well as affirmation. Jesus did die, he endured separation from God, he forfeited yet again, for a time, His

rightful position with God, and we in grace, know that we too will triumph over death and take our prepared place with Christ, beside our father God.

Tomorrow is....

We await the glorious day!

For further reading follow the below links

https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/apostles_creed.cfm

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/did-christ-ever-descend-to-hell>

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p122a5p1.htm

God bless you this Easter celebration.

Lenten devotionals: Good Friday



Crucifixion

April 19th 2019

The morning dawned as any other,
Yet not to me.

Response to the chorus of birds was hostile,
Do you not know?

The sun silently emerged, but dimly so
More befitting of this, I agreed.

Thus silently I began my vigil to watch and pray
At the foot of the cross.

The church received my secret entry
Unobstrusive as shadow I knelt quickly down
Unworthy to watch, unworthy to receive
But worthy through grace to approach and feel.

Can I too, hear the mocking voices?

Does the harsh slap cross my face? Do

My hands buckle as the nails are driven,

Do they indeed hold me in place?

No, not this, but the weight of wrong,

The burden of yesterday's mistakes

The love that didn't flow; the joy hidden by injustice.

An hour? Is this all I give on this the darkest night?

Then from the deepest, certainty of soul

A whisper shroud brings comfort in eternal

Absence of noise.

I hear the cry, *My God why have you forsaken me?*

Knowing this not to be my voice,

for me the reply

My child this was for you, it is finished!

Renewed, look up to see

The darkness of today will disperse in the one true light.

The biblical account as recorded by a [John](#)

Listen to the gospel reading

LIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS

Charles Villiers Stanford

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord;
and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers
of this night;
for the love of thy only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

Lenten devotionals: Holy week Monday

How soon after Jesus rides into Jerusalem, the crowds shouting and honouring him, do the leaders, scribes and Pharisees become tired and afraid of the following Jesus has.

They begin to scheme against him, wanting to discredit him and turn the people against him.

Jesus appears to be on a mission and enters the temple, noticing the extortion of the money lenders and the sellers of sacrifice birds and animals, no doubt charging greater rates to those wanting to offer sacrifice for the coming Passover.

Was Jesus angry? Yes, and disappointed and sorrowful and bowed down with the ordeal he knew was approaching.

Did Jesus show mercy and love? Yes, for those abused by the system and power. Yes for those out into a position of obedience to mans interpretation of the law, rather than the law of compassion and understanding.

Did Jesus show divine authority? Yes, as he pronounced judgement on those having disrespect for the place of worship. Authority that amazed the crowd as they listened to his teaching. Authority that frightened the teaches of the law as they saw the crowds gathering to hear Him and witness His miracles.

John, the writer who gives more of the depth of Jesus' teaching, goes on to provide Jesus talking about his death. Jesus calls himself the light. The light that soon will be hidden in the darkness of sin and death.

Soon the darkness will descend. But the best is yet to come.

Words of comfort

Hear also what Saint Paul saith.

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. i. 15.

Lenten devotionals: Palm Sunday

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

Luke 19:28-40 New International Version (NIV)

²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴ They replied, "The Lord needs it."

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"^[a]

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

³⁹ *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"*

⁴⁰ *"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*

Apologies for not posting yesterday. To be honest I struggled with things I wanted to write. After starting several times I relaxed and gave it up to God.

Reader, just read and pause. The best is yet to come!

In His own time, as always happens, He whispered to me this morning, "Sue, It's already written down. Just post, and read."

Lenten devotionals: day 32

Hear the words of comfort

John 3:16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Often expressed as the whole message of the Bible in a nutshell this is probably the most quoted/known verse.

It certainly does capture the essence of the creed

We believe:

God: the three together loved the world that was created.

Loved it in its perfection and saw that it was good. Loved it more and actively in its imperfection and initiated the restoration plan.

He: God the father, almighty one, Jehovah (English translation) gave the son, Jesus Christ. The spoken word of God, that became as man, taking on the earthly, human form. Born in humble beginnings, a man on a mission to provide the way back to life.

We believe that the son lived on this earth, paid the necessary sacrifice for all the wrongs in this world once and for all, so that as forgiven, spirit filled people we can have

Eternity: the life of being sons of God, heir to the throne.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Romans 8:11

I like the extended explanation that Phillips gives

All who follow the leading of God's Spirit are God's own sons. Nor are you meant to relapse into the old slavish attitude of fear—you have been adopted into the very family circle of God and you can say with a full heart, "Father, my Father". The Spirit himself endorses our inward conviction that we really are the children of God. Think what that means. If we are his children we share his treasures, and all that Christ claims as his will belong to all of us as well! Yes, if we share in his suffering we shall certainly share in his glory.

We may repeat these words of comfort on a Sunday, sharing them with those around us that also believe.

Do we also believe them enough on Monday, as we share our life with others who may not believe. Do we believe enough and love enough to live our lives allowing the spirit to stir within us to demonstrate God's love to the world?

Go in peace to love and serve your Lord.

Go on your way, rejoicing. Have a wonderful weekend

Lenten devotional: day 31

"At any given moment, within a certain undefinable radius of your sorry body or soul, there will be something that can lift you. The trick is knowing where to look."

If I die before i wake
Emily Koch

The above quote is taken from the book I am presently reading.

To put it in , the words are spoken in the mind of the main character of the book. He is hospitalised after a climbing accident, lying in an induced coma. As he lies there, he recognises his visitors, longing to communicate with them but frustrated because they cannot grasp that he is hearing their conversation. He brings us into his world, sharing the little acts of kindness that bring him relief. The depth of meaning within that sentence has been with me all day. How many times have we been in need of a lift, not knowing to whom or where to turn?

Jesus gives us words of comfort.

These are regularly used in many church services. To continue extending our creed studies in keeping with the season, they will feature during the next few posts.

Hear what comfortable words our Savior Christ speaks to all who truly turn to him.”

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus comforts us, but he also demands action.

Come: He will never enforce himself upon us. If we want the rest that he promises, we have to bring our problems, our grief, our desires before him. The person weary of carrying

fear, disappointment, loss and sorrow, must actively give them up to Jesus.

Take: why does Jesus promise comfort and rest by asking us to take up his yoke? With the sacrifice Jesus bore for us, the yoke of the old law ended. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. Now we live under his grace rather than the binding rules and regulations of the law. He has paid the dues in full and His love and gentleness offers respite from the cares of the world.

Learn: Jesus lived as man in this world. He has been tempted as we are and experienced loss and pain and death, when even his closest friends turned away from him.

When we face betrayal, can we learn to say, forgive them?

When we lose friends, family, those that are dear to us, can we say, Lord, I believe and trust you.

Even in despair, can we look at the cross and shout, Father, your will be done?

Connect tomorrow for more words of comfort.

Connect today by sharing your faith.

In peace and love.

Lenten devotionals: day 30

As we approach the final days of Lent I am asking your indulgence for a little bit of humour.

This evening I made Yorkshire puddings for the family to go with the beef pot roast. Not being British born, my grandson wanted to know how they were made, and I quote, "what makes them puffy"?

I answered in age old tradition, "because they are made with love". Which reminded me of the Stanley Holloway monologue entitled Yorkshire Pudding. So may I present to you, courtesy of you tube, The tale of the first Yorkshire Pudding"

Made with love

For any readers, unfamiliar with Yorkshire's , 'national,' dish here is the recipe.

A Yorkshire tradition discusses Yorkshire traditions.

So, where am I going with this?

Lent follows, pancake Day, when traditionally, all fat and eggs are used up prior to the period of frugal eating of the Lent fast. Shrove means to be cleansed or absolved; starting with Ash Wednesday Lent becomes a time of self examination, for some, perhaps, even a period of denying oneself, a way of remembering and participating in a 40 day fast as Jesus did.

Yorkshire Pudding batter is made from similar ingredients to pancake batter, so as I was making them today, and enjoying sharing them with my family it seemed fitting to share with you.

Remembering the story also brought to mind that we are all made with love. It is the perfect love of Christ that enables us to be filled with joy and peace.

Father God, thank you that we can find pleasure in the simple things. Thank you for the joy of sharing family meals and family traditions. As Christ was welcomed into homes during His time on earth, may He also be welcome in our homes today, in the meals we enjoy with family. May we never take for granted the importance of family time, of sharing together and supporting one another. As we enter into these last few days of Lent, may we continue to diligently seek out ways to share our faith and the wealth we enjoy; "[outdoing](#) each other in showing honour"

Lenten devotionals: day 29

I believe Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

It is because Jesus completed the work of salvation that He can now sit at the right hand of God. He can claim this place of equality with God, as our high priest, the way in which we approach God.

*^tWho is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—^uwho is at the right hand of God, ^vwho indeed is interceding for us. [1](#) *Romans 8:34*.*

Does this make us want to seek Him in higher places? Of course! In my quiet times, when I am away from temptation I can focus on Christ, seated with God, and know His love and strength to persevere in this race we call life.

His words and teaching and the inspiration of scripture encourages me to think lofty, to find love on a higher level. I can resolve to show kindness and mercy. I can live in joy and peace in a world of hatred and fear. I can dare to be generous, patient and kind-hearted, in a world of intolerance and greed.

Above all I can be faithful, gracious and in control of my desires, through the grace of my redeemer.

Lord, because I can look up and experience the love of God through your sacrifice, allow me to live a worthy life until such time you return in power to claim us for your own. May I seek to love more each day, to give more of myself to others and forgive any harm to myself and others. I honour you and proclaim your holy name.

Keep the faith.

Lenten devotionals: day 28

I am delighted to find this ASL version of the apostolic creed, especially as it is spoken also.

Many years ago, when I lived in Canada I completed an introduction to ASL course. I have not had occasion to use it much, but pleased that I was able to follow along. Perhaps some of you use, understand or have experience with ASL or BSL or Makaton.

Again, mixing it up a little to fit in with Lent and Easter, today we start,

I believe Christ sits at the right hand of God

Picture the scene. As a full time stay at home parent, you have risen before your family to prepare a nutritious breakfast, ensured all have clean clothes to wear, a healthy lunch and snacks, homework checked and all places in school bags.

Then the school run, pick up groceries and home to do the laundry, make beds, tidy away cluttered toys and clothes from bedroom floors and made advance start on dinner. A care visit on an elderly neighbour takes you through to the afternoon, when you can have a short breather, before the afternoon school run. What do you do?

Sit in your favourite chair with a cup of tea or coffee and rest, assured that you have fulfilled tasks for the day.

Or as a full time professional, you have risen early to beat the rush hour traffic, in order to get to work in plenty of time to prepare for that morning meeting in which you have to present recent figures. Then, there are emails to answer, phone calls to make, jobs that require attention and bosses that want everything yesterday, not when you can possibly deliver. Finally, just before end of day, you have five minutes to yourself, to sit at the desk with the lunch you didn't have time to eat and feel good about the empty in tray, the full out box, the neatly written planner for tomorrow and the cluttered desk cleared.

Sitting and resting after a good days work is satisfying. Time to review and rest with tomorrow planned.

After Jesus had finished his ministry on earth. When the debt for sin had been paid, and the work of salvation complete, He returned to the father, God and sat down on the right hand.

The significance for us His people lies in the deeper, better approach we enjoy to our God, through the spirit of Christ. The way that Jesus told us, we would have through Him.

Because Jesus cried, "It is finished"

Because he was triumphant over death

Because we have access to the Father

Jesus sits to signify completion until the bride is prepared, waiting for her to join Him in heaven.

Whatever prosperity or defeat may occur in our space, whatever may become and pass away, there is one constant, one thing that remains and continues, this sitting of His at the right hand of God the Father. [\[16\]](#)