

6.21.20 L12P3 Joined to Christ's Death and Resurrection in Time of Change

- March 8 was the day that we moved our clocks ahead one hour, lost an hour of sleep, and began Daylight Savings Time
 - Although spring had not yet officially begun, March 8 was an unseasonably warm day, and down in Florida that afternoon the Phillies lost to the Toronto Blue Jays 9 to nothing to post a promising 11 and 5 record
 - March 8 seems like a long time ago, and it was – that day was also that last day that we were able to gather for Sunday worship
- In the 104 days since then, here we are with at least some of us back together, and so much has happened since March 8
 - The Phils played just one more game before baseball, as well as the rest of sports were cancelled for the coronavirus pandemic
 - Spring came a few weeks later in March, and that whole season of spring passed by, and now today is officially the second day in summer
 - Looking back at a church magazine that has several pages of news clips [CC 3/25/20 p. 9] here are two very brief articles from the March 25th edition
 - First – “The largest number of COVID-19 infections outside China is South Korea, where more than 1,000 cases and 11 deaths have been confirmed.” It goes on to say that the spread of the coronavirus in South Korea has been linked to people gathering to worship in two large churches.
 - And second – this quote from the pastor of predominately Black congregation in Houston, Texas: “Many white Americans continue to turn a blind eye to racial injustice. We are a wounded people – wounded especially by white supremacy. Our wound has been ignored and covered over. And it continues to fester.”
 - Let me remind you, that was the March 25th edition of The Christian Century magazine that went to press, was mailed, and arrived at my house just about two weeks after we suspended Sunday worship services

- And those little articles strike be as an ironic hint toward an as-yet unseen future
 - I really wish that we could turn the clock back to a month like March when a country's total number of coronavirus deaths was only 11!
 - Since then, COVID-19 spread here, we have had about 120,000 deaths, and we are on track to reach about 200,000 deaths by September
 - I also wish that we could turn the clock back, and rip the band aid off the festering wound of racism and white supremacy and begin to come to terms and address it before the suffocating death of George Floyd in May, which brought 8 minutes and 46 seconds of horror into our faces followed by peaceful protest, unpeaceful riots, and renewed calls for justice
 - Let's be honest. Racism is a continuum that ranges from explicit hate at one end, to talking about people "like them" at the middle, to often unconscious attitudes and perceptions that influence everyone including me... and by the way 8 minutes and 46 seconds is about the length of many of my sermons.
- So much has changed in the world since we last got together for worship, so much has been cancelled or been put on hold around us, and in the meantime people in our congregation have lived lives from the front line of medical care with people with COVID-19, to lives lived in isolation and only rarely traveling outside their homes.
- And during this time away from each other, several people have died from other causes, but several of our families have experienced the deaths of loved ones due to the coronavirus
- In the midst of all the change both in our lives and in the world around us since we last gathered together with the promise that the risen Christ is in our midst whenever two or more gather in his name – in the midst of all that has changed, the reading from Paul's letter to the Romans for today proclaims that there is at least one thing that DOES NOT change, and this

one thing is a promise of God in which we can trust and live in hope

- “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [6:3-5]”
- Our baptisms are more than a simple washing
- Our baptisms are God’s act that joins our lives, past, present, and future, to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- We have ALREADY died
- And we ALREADY are living a new life, because our lives and our futures are bound to Jesus Christ
- So much has changed since March 8.
- Some of us have quarantined, some of us have had to go out to do essential work, some of us have seen milestones like graduations and proms and birthdays celebrated in private or by video, some of us have lost jobs, all of us have stared death in the face of a man named George, and hopefully we will begin to come to terms in a new way with both personal and national racism, yet ALL of us... all of us who at last can gather here today can trust the enduring baptismal promise of death and life in this tumultuous time, and not only that, but we can begin to look at other people and even the whole world as God would like us to see – a God-loved humanity and creation that is begin made new.