

## *Resurrection Reality*

Psalm 133

Acts 4:32-35

*Please pray with me:*

*Lord, last week our Easter celebration reminded us that you are God With Us. Now, don't let us down, God. Grab us while we are still listening. Show us why it matters. Teach us to live into your resurrection reality. And may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.*

As you have heard and seen this morning, this is Heritage Sunday. This is the day we pull out pictures of the original church, we honor those members who have faithfully participated in this community of faith for 25 years or more, we retell the story of the Campbells and thank you, Caroline, for dropping by - that was awesome! It's important for us to retell this story, because in retelling the story we remember who we are, and where we come from. We recognize that we are here today because of the faithfulness of the generations who preceded us, and the faithfulness of the God who calls us into being as a community of faith.

Now, if that were all we did this morning, we'd be in trouble. We'd be in trouble, because if we stay looking back, over our shoulder at the glory days gone by, we would get mired in nostalgia. We would suffer the temptation to see through rosy rear-view lenses a past that always seems more beautiful and perfect than it really was, a past that always seems happier than today—and, most fatal of all—a past that always seems more promising than tomorrow! If we did that, we'd be in trouble—doomed to stay stuck in a wistfulness that refuses to face the future that God is even now holding open to us.

But that's not what today is all about. Today is about remembering the past so that we can realize and lean into that future. It's about hearing again our call to become a community of faith where the resurrection is not just a poetic theory, but a lived reality. You've heard from Caroline Campbell, but there's another of our forebears in faith who has something important to say to us today. Listen to Luke as he describes the experience of that very first post-resurrection church, as described in the Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35

*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power, the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Whoa. That's big. That's amazing. That's the story of a people who are transformed into from a scattered group of fearful folk into a community... with an emphasis on the UNITY, a place where they shared what they had and where NO ONE WAS IN NEED. Is this for real? Can this be true? Is it a rosy rear-view-lensed nostalgia for a utopia that never was? Or is it indeed a testimony to the world-changing power of the risen Christ—an invitation and a challenge to us all about what it might really look like if we were to live like we believe it's true? ..... I propose to you that our reading today is not about some dusty irrelevant past, but rather about our invitation to the future. To consider what the world might look like if we were to live as people who have encountered the risen Christ in ways that transform us, that transform our relationships to one another and to God—to live as people for whom the resurrection is not a poetic theory, but a revolutionary reality.

Rest assured, folks, this is not about the past, but about the future.

That's part of the treasure that is Orchard Lake Community Church. It's in our DNA, it's in our ethos, it's in our very structure. This is a place that remembers its past, honors its heritage, even as it leans joyfully and eagerly into a new future. You know that what happens here on the shores of Orchard Lake is not about the building. It's not about being a community center. It's not even about providing programs for our young people. It's about providing a place where we all may be transformed... from a cluster of strangers fearful about the economy, into a gathering of disciples who share one heart, and one mind, who look—not to our own individual needs—but to the needs of all. The building is simply a house where we can become a community of intentional Christian spiritual practice.

If we yearn back for the glory days of the 1950s, when mainline protestant churches were in their heyday, we might be discouraged and downhearted. It's no secret that our denomination is shrinking, and churches like ours are struggling to get by. But that's not the whole story. You see, in a world that is increasingly secular, there are mainline churches that continue to thrive. These churches are not thriving because they offer electric bands or multi-media entertainment experiences. On the contrary, the mainline churches like ours that continue to thrive are those communities of faith who know themselves to be communities of intentional Christian spiritual practice. I'm talking about communities where people learn to worship God, learn to pray and read the Bible, learn how to reflect on life through a theological lens, and in so doing, learn how to extend hospitality, or care, or peace, or love, or joy, or justice into the world. This building is simply a house where we can become a community of intentional Christian spiritual practice.

Now, practice is what we do when we are learning something new. It's something we do over and over and over and over again until it becomes second nature, until you know it by heart. Recently I heard the story of a young man explaining how he came to a career in music. He said that when he was a kid, his mother made him take piano lessons. He didn't want to—that was his mother's program, not his—but he was told he had to, he had no choice. He hated it. Most of all, he hated practice. He hated the long hours picking out the notes on the keyboard. He hated the finger-exercises. He hated being chained to that instrument when his friends were outside playing. But he kept at it—out of fear of punishment, I suppose.

He kept at it, until one day, everything changed. He can't tell you when it happened—he just knows it did. One day, he sat down at the keyboard to practice, not because he had to, but because he wanted to. He practiced because he realized he was getting good at it, and it thrilled him. And ever after that, he played and played and played the piano, not out of some obligation to his mother—he played because it gave him joy. That was when he realized then that he had ceased to be someone who played the piano. He had become a musician.

Today, we baptized Tessa Kayanna Spadafore. She came to this font, not because she decided to, but because her parents did. For the moment, it is her parents' program. But what you, as a church, have just committed to do, is to ensure that she be encouraged, alongside all of us, to practice. To practice, practice, practice. To practice prayer, practice reading the Bible, practice worship, to practice service, to practice hospitality, discernment, practice household economics, practice peace, love, justice, joy. Practice.

Practice with us, Tessa. Practice until it becomes second nature; practice until you know it by heart; practice until you become a Christian.

Our community of faith, here in this place on the shores of Orchard Lake, is not about the past—it's about the future. It's not about a program. It's not about a building. It is about being a community of intentional Christian spiritual practice. This place is where we come to practice, practice, practice; practice until we know it by heart—until we cease to be a gathering of people who come to the same church, and instead become Christians...a community... transformed from a scattered group of folk into the body of Christ... made possible only by a risen Savior, living and moving among us. A resurrection reality.