

Yesterday was Earth Day, and many people marked the day around our country with planting trees, remembering to conserve, recycle and reuse our resources whenever possible. Here at Trinity, as has been our custom recently, we'll plant flowers, and it will be a good way to use some of the Easter flowers which have graced the church last Sunday and today.

So, we've put away the Easter baskets. I've got a lot of empty plastic eggs to put away for next year. And we say that Easter is over. But, of course, we know that in the church the Easter season goes on until the Day of Pentecost. We have seven Sundays in Easter. And we have a lifetime of Easter ahead of each of us. Because, although we know it, we don't think about it. Easter is our way of life, not just one day of the year. We are Easter people.

But that doesn't mean that Easter erased Good Friday. It's the tradition in our church to display crosses that do not show Christ crucified, but an empty cross – Christ is risen. But as our Gospel story this morning about poor Thomas shows, Jesus is risen, is changed, and yet still bears the marks of the crucifixion on his hands and his side. Good Friday still happened. God is still with us in our sufferings as well in in our triumphs.

This is what has God been trying to communicate with us through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. It's not just that God is all powerful and can raise Jesus from the dead. It's not all about God's glory and omnipotence. God wants us to know that he is present all the time: in the good times when we have successes and point to God (we seem to all point up even though God is everywhere) and give thanks. And also in the times when we are at the very depths of despair. When everything goes wrong. When people around us leave or get sick, or die. God is with us there too.

The cross stands there even in the Easter season to remind us that God is ready to hold us up and lift us up even as Jesus was lifted up on that cross. Thomas is the disciple that gets called out by Jesus in this famous resurrection appearance story today. The other disciples had an experience that he missed, and he too wants to have that experience that Christ is alive. And we think to ourselves that we don't get to see Jesus. But we have more than one sense. We do not have to see to believe as Jesus himself points out. Jesus, through the gift of the Holy Spirit comes to us through what we hear, what we taste, and what we touch...on Sunday mornings and the rest of the week too.

And insight came to me this week from reading the passage from the Book of Acts to one of our shut in members of the congregation this week.

I had been reading the passage from Acts that we heard last Sunday to him. And in the back of my head I was thinking about the passage that we just heard this morning. And suddenly it hit me. In both cases Peter was preaching about the risen Christ to help others understand what they didn't get

to see either, but each passage tells us who he was preaching too. A completely different audience. Last Sunday Paul said

*Peter began to speak to Cornelius and the other Gentiles: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

This Sunday Peter starts out his sermonizing to this crowd saying

*Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know*

He makes a point of quoting scripture that he knows the people there will know. It's Psalm 18 in fact that he quotes. So he's

Through Luke's writing, Peter comes alive and we can see him in our mind's eye standing there and speaking to the crowd who he used to be a part of when he was a Jew. He tailors his message to the crowd he's trying to reach! Just like one would do today. And so for the Jewish audience, he reminds them of David, that beloved king of long ago, and of the prophecy that the Messiah would come from David's line.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. All there were called witnesses, even if they themselves had not seen the Christ in the resurrection appearances.

And we are all witnesses too – to the power of Christ through the Spirit. We are all here as miracles of new Easter life through God's gracious love.

Live Easter life, not just Easter Day.