



## ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON  
EASTER SUNDAY  
4-8-12

Here we are – gathered together this Easter morning. We're a good group – a big group. This is nice – wonderful even. Yet I've got some wondering going on inside of me. I've actually been wondering a bit about why we all ARE HERE today? Truly, what brings us out and into a church on this day? I don't think any of us really expect to see Jesus alive and in our midst. If that did happen, I imagine we would react much as the women in the gospel did – with terror and amazement.

We might even react like my mother did when after leaving for a meeting I snuck back into the house and scared her by popping out from behind a door. Her reaction was – “Don't ever do that to me again!” So what if a dead loved one showed up in the room? I think we might have the same reaction of fear and uncertainty and be left wondering what to say or do. It would be SO Unexpected if the living Jesus was seen by any of us.

So, if we're not really expecting to see a resurrected Jesus this morning – what do we want?

I know there's the pull of tradition and family time and Easter clothes, but I'm going to guess that we come here because of hope. However undefined or unrecognized it may be – within us all lives a hope. A hope shown on Christmas Eve when we gather because we really do hope that God came to earth as a human, born into the world as a newborn infant. And a hope on Easter morning that Jesus really came back to life after experiencing death.

We do rather wish to see Jesus, or at least be assured that he did live among us, but we know that probably is not going to happen for us as it did for the disciples 2,000 years ago. Instead, we hear again the story of their witness and we hope it is all true. We look at each other and we hope or wonder if everyone else around us thinks the story is true. And we ask ourselves – at some level - Do I really believe in this resurrection stuff?

And how we answer that question determines the foundation of our faith. For faith is and always will be a “hope in the things that are unseen.” As it says in Romans, Chapter 8 – “For in hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

So we gather with hope – not giddy joy – not yet anyhow – more with gladness, encouragement, appreciation, thankfulness, even love. A love that says, “You did that for us?” For a love that really wins, a love that really endures, a love that overcomes all.

We hope for a God that loves us and is waiting for us with open arms. To be loved with a love that lasts through and beyond death – a love that promises life and that our life has meaning no matter what. We hope for our own lives to carry on – to have new life, over and over.

And it is both the imagining of and the reality of that love that sustains me, strengthens my faith, and feeds my hope. For I have felt, seen, and experienced a love that is more than and beyond my human capacities. It is a love that is divine, a love that never dies, a love that brings me joy.

Listen to this story from the Jewish tradition about Ain Soph.

## **AinSoph**

*In the beginning before there were any beginnings and endings, there was no place that was not already God! And we call this unimaginable openness, AinSoph - Being-without end. Then came the urge to give life to our world and to us. But there was no place that was not already God. So AinSoph breathed in to make room, like a father steps back so his child will walk to him. Into the emptiness AinSoph set vessels and began to fill them with divine light, as a mother places bowls in which to pour her delicious soup. As the light poured forth a perfect world was being created!*

*Think of it! A world without greed and cruelty and violence! But then, something happened. The bowls shattered. No one knows why. Perhaps the bowls were too frail? Perhaps the light too intense? Perhaps AinSoph was learning. After all no one makes perfect the first time. And with the shattering of the bowls, divine sparks threw everywhere! Some rushing back to AinSoph, some falling, falling, trapped in the broken shards to become our world, and us.*

*Though this is hard to believe, the perfect world is all around us, but broken into jagged pieces, like a puzzle thrown to the floor, the picture lost, each piece without meaning, until someone puts them back together again. We are that someone. There is no one else. We are the ones who can find the broken pieces, remember how they fit together and rejoin them. This is the repairing of the world -- the mending of creation. In every moment, with every act, we can heal our world and us. We are all holy sparks dulled by separation.*

*But when we meet, and talk and eat and make love, when we work and play and disagree with holiness in our eyes, seeing AinSoph everywhere, then our brokenness will end, and our bowls will be strong enough to hold the light, and our light will be gentle enough to fill the bowls. As we repair the world together, we will learn that there is no place that is not God!*

There is no place that is not God! From the beginning Jesus was and is the Light. We carry the divine within us. The hope that draws us this morning is the foundation that sustains us. Christ died and rose from the dead. His life, death, and resurrection are poured into our souls and hearts through the Holy Spirit. We carry the

divine within us. We see Jesus in each other and in all of creation. Jesus is among the living and his love carries us onward, inward, outward. How then shall we live.

Listen to these words from Hebrews, Chapter 10: “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Alleluia – Jesus lives again and so do we!  
Thanks be to God.