

April 7, 2024  
The Second Sunday of Easter  
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Come, spirit of the Living G-d. Come upon us. Come upon me. And let some word of mine be some word of yours; for some one of yours. In the most holy name of Jesus, in whom we find our shared reality. Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

**The L-rd is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Who here has used a study aid called Cliff's Notes? Who here has personally withheld their use? Anybody here who allowed them, within reason? Well, when the news broke in 2001 that Clifton "Cliff" Hillegass, creator of Cliff's Notes, died, I was grateful, but a bit disheartened that his obituary did not read: "He was born. He invented Cliff's Notes. He died." Just the highlights. The Gospels, each with their own focus, are that—highlight reels. We aren't given many glimpses, if any, of the day-to-day life as a disciple or an early member of the Church. Once Jesus rose on that first Easter, we begin to get insights into the fabric of the communities that center around faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. We know about Jesus. Now, we need to know what to do with that reality.

As the message of the text transitions from who Jesus is to who the community of the faithful are like, we find that there is a shared spirit. There's a shared spirit in our readings today. Be it in our passage from Acts, the "we" who wrote the first letter attributed to John, St John's account of the life of Jesus and birth of his ministry, even the Psalm all have this same thread.

Now, I don't think this means everyone is lock-step and blindly together 100% of the way. Never has been. Never will be. There were disagreements even with Jesus there as they traveled together. People have been, are, and forever will be that—people. Yet, yet, there was a common thing that bound them all together—their belief in Jesus as the Son of G-d—made of stuff like us to live like us. John, I feel, is the most earnest Gospel-writer when it comes to showing Jesus the person. We see Jesus weep. We see Jesus enthundered. We see Jesus as fully human—the Word made flesh dwelling with us. John, to use a British idiom, "does what it says on the tin."

In spite of their disagreements, the disciples, and then, the early church, could at least agree on one thing. They could boil it down to a simple syrup and sit at the same table. Striving together. Aiming for the same goal—living their lives together as messengers of G-d to bring G-d's reality into the reality of Creation. Community; like Jesus crucified, entombed, and risen; holds the same paradox—real, yet not limited by walls, doors, locks, or even time itself. Community, like Jesus, like G-d, is very real, tangible, and not simply an æther.

Backing up for a bit here—the word 'community' has shown up four times so far. After that sentence, make that five. Community: Latin: *con*-together, *munis*-performing services. Not comm-unity. Co-mmunity. Serving together. Acting together. Doing together. Working together. Not merely with each other. Living alongside each other. Shared values. Shared emotions. Shared experiences. Empathy with each other. We, each, are gifts from G-d of G-d, so, too, are our presences together equally a gift.

Magnifying the middle of our Collect for today, they quote “may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith” close quote. To very loosely paraphrase Lucian Stone, PhD, religion, faith, belief, does not wake up, brush its teeth, read the newspaper, and eat breakfast itself. It lives and breathes and functions through its community of followers. To put this in a sort of Cliff's Notes version—we are called to a faith that DO, not a faith that BE. Otherwise, we fail to have a shared root of existence.

This shared root goes all the way back to King David. In the Psalm for this morning, he rejoices in the divine-ness of being able to live in community. But, live, how? To live has a lot of nuance. Digging into the depths of his word choice, *shévet*, from *yasháv*, carries with it dwelling, sitting alongside, abiding with, inhabiting, and being wedded to. Yes, wedded as in married. Equals, side by side, under the tent of G-d's presence, in this work that is our life in community. Bringing our own skills to weave with our fellow person's.

Okay, so, now what? We're together. We have this common belief in the Living G-d. Equals in this journey, Great. Cool. What do we do with it? With us? With each of us, ourselves? Full transparency here—if I had an answer to that... well, insert your favorite ultimate success here.

Maybe this, ultimately, is the heart of the Paschal mystery. That, this side of Heaven, we genuinely just don't know any of the answers to how to have a perfect community, a pristine life of service with each other. But, like our predecessors before us in the faith and our descendants after us in the faith, we have to be willing to just find out. Without the Cliff's Notes.

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

**The L-rd is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Amen.