

On the mind of the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Jung-Chul Lee...

Have you ever looked closely at how the disciples react to the resurrection? Two big emotions run through their various responses. The first, as we might expect, is: *joy*. John describes the disciples as “overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (Jn. 20.20). Luke similarly depicts the disciples being so joyful when Christ first appears that they can barely believe it’s him (Lk. 24.41). The second, more surprising, and perhaps even more prominent emotion, is: *fear*. All the first visitors to the tomb run from it when they see it empty. Mark says “terror and amazement” seized them (Mk. 16.8). Luke describes them falling to the ground with fright (Lk. 24.5). Matthew brings both emotions together when he describes them running from the tomb with both “fear and great joy” (Mt. 28.8).

Fear and joy. Polar emotions that not only run through the accounts of the resurrection, but through much of Scripture.

Fear of judgment—Adam and Eve banished from the Garden. Cain discovered to be a murderer. David exposed as a scheming adulterer. Israel thrown into exile as a result of its sin. Fear of holiness—of the God Moses met on Mt Sinai—amid fire, and lightning, and smoldering cloud. Fear of the coming day of the Lord—the day when God “will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth” (Zephaniah 1.2). *Terrible fear*.

And yet also, great joy. After forty days of rain and 150 days of flood, Noah sends out the dove and it returns with an olive branch. After the shame of the tower of Babel, God calls Abraham to be the father of a nation. As the Ark of the Covenant is brought into Jerusalem, David dances before the Lord. As Ezra reads out the books of the Law to the returning exiles, they weep with joy. As Elizabeth greets Jesus’ mother-to-be she feels the babe within her leap for joy. The father of the prodigal son, bursting with joy to see his wayward son come home. *Great, great joy*

Fear and joy. Polar emotions that not only run through the accounts of the resurrection, but through so much of our experience of faith today.

Fear that the fabric of the society that has shaped the church will come apart; that long held values are disintegrating; that major denominations are mired in self-doubt; that other faiths and new technologies will dismantle any sense of certainty we may still have. Fear for ourselves—that we’ll experience crushing disappointment, that our hopes will be illusions, and our critical friends be proved correct. Fear for those we love—fear that however much we care we will still have to face that awful moment of parting and letting go. And fear about issues way beyond our control—from the terrorism and war that destroy countries, to the addictions and diseases that destroy lives, to the greed and plunder that are destroying the earth. *So much to fear*.

And yet also great joy. *Great joy*. Joy of a lamb finding its rickety feet in a meadow. Joy of a baby discovering how to swallow. Joy of the song, when we have the words, and God has the tune. The joy of creation, when we hear birds chirp on a spring morning. The joy of the harvest, when all is fresh and mellow. The joy of friendship, of those we have known and loved through thick and thin. The joy of forgiveness, when bitterness and failure do not get the last word. The joy of being part of a team, when you believe in what you’re doing and where you’re going. *Fabulous joy*.

So here we are. It’s Easter. And so we, just like those first visitors to the tomb, now face an empty tomb filled with those same two big emotions. Fear and joy, the two poles, the two extremes of our human response to the awesome intimacy of God. Fear and joy run with us throughout our lives together, as constant reminders of the cost and the promise of following Jesus.

But there is a secret. It is a secret that we only glimpse at in this life. It is a secret that was first revealed to those two early risers on the first day of the week, while all creation breathed in the aroma of anticipation. It is the secret of Easter. It is a secret that is the climax of our gospel, a secret of the mystery of fear and joy.

And the secret is this. At Easter—the *joy wins*. The joy has won! And nothing can ever take that victory away.

Nate+

FREEING JESUS WRAP-UP SESSION – Thursday, April 28

Over the season of Lent, several of us have been reading through a book by Diana Butler Bass entitled, *Freeing Jesus*. During these weeks, this book has led us to consider various identities of Jesus—Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, Presence. Whether or not you've been a part of this study, be sure to join us **Thursday, April 28, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.** as we bring the study to a close.

One of the most important things we've discussed during this time is the way in which, while Scripture says that we as human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, we are constantly trying to re-make Jesus in our own image and likeness, instead.

In a final session open to the whole congregation, we will discuss some of the common ways people re-make Jesus in their own image and likeness, and consider other identities of Jesus that we (including, Diana Butler Bass) may have missed. Join the discussion in the Parish House or on Zoom. Email the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee at nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org with any questions.

Followed by a time of fellowship and refreshments for those who attend in the Parish House.

20s/30s BASEBALL OUTING – Friday, April 29

On **Friday, April 29**, the 20s/30s Group is headed to the friendly confines of Citifield for a fellowship and community building event, as the Mets take on the Phillies at **7:10 p.m.** Even if you're not a baseball fan, this will be a great time to get to know your peers in a relaxed environment.

For those who want to travel together, meet at the Parish House (209 Madison Ave.) at 6:00 p.m. We can walk up together from there to Grand Central and take the 7 train to the stadium. For those who want to meet us there, the game starts at 7:10 p.m.

Email the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee at nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org to reserve your ticket or for more information about young adult ministries.

EVERY WEEK AT INCARNATION

Sunday Bible Study: Bible Study is held in the Parish House (and via Zoom) on Sundays from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. We generally follow the Yale Bible Study program, which offers course materials on select books of the Bible, deepened by insights from Yale Divinity School professors.

Sunday School for Children: During the 11:00 a.m. service, children ages 3 to 10 depart the service with their teachers for Sunday School in the Parish House. (All teachers have been vaccinated.) They return before the end of worship. See our website, churchoftheincarnation.org, for more information on Children and Family Ministries.

Wednesday Holy Eucharist: Join us each Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. for this Rite I spoken service of Holy Eucharist, which includes a brief homily and organ music.

Thursday Candlelight Communion: Join us each Thursday at 6:15 p.m. for Candlelight Communion, a service of Holy Eucharist that incorporates chant and silence as well as elements of contemporary worship. This service is informal and contemplative, with music led by a Cantor and a brief reflection by one of the clergy. You can also stream this service at youtube.com/churchoftheincarnation.

Daily Office: Services of Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer and Compline are held via Zoom. To view the weekly schedule, go to churchoftheincarnation.org/worship.

To receive access information for offerings held via Zoom, join our email distribution list by filling out the yellow Connect Card found in your pew or signing up through our website.