

Sermon for Christ & Grace Church Petersburg, VA  
Easter Day, April 16, 2017  
The Rev. Bill Queen  
“The Three Easters”  
Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18

did you know that there are three different Easters?; I asked this question one time in an adult education class and an astute parishioner answered: there is the Protestant and Catholic Easter which is celebrated on one Sunday, the Greek and Russian Orthodox Easter which usually falls on a different Sunday, and the secular Easter of bunny rabbits, candy, and eggs

while those are certainly three different Easters, those do not happen to be the three Easters I was thinking of; I’m thinking of Easter past, Easter present, and Easter future; and I want to take them out of chronological order and look first at Easter past, then Easter future, and end with Easter present

Easter past was the first Easter morning when Jesus’ resurrection occurred and was discovered; this is the Easter of history; it is very important, because without Jesus’ resurrection, we never would have even heard of Jesus; his life, his teachings, his examples would not have caught on beyond a small band of rag-tag disciples had it not for the earth-shattering event—or should I say death-shattering event—that Jesus had risen to a new resurrection life, and in the process promised that new resurrection life to us; without such an event, people would never have given their lives over—and often actually given their lives through martyrdom and death—to spreading the Good News and living out this radical new vision that Jesus brought, about how people could relate to God in a new way, and about how people could relate to each other in a new way; that’s Easter past

Easter future will be the final Easter morning when our resurrection will occur; this is the Easter of hope; it is also very important, because in it is the promise that we will one day experience a resurrection just like Jesus’; and that new resurrection life will be as different from this life as a flourishing tree or bush is different from the seed from which it grew (I feel safe using that analogy, because Jesus and Paul both used it); what looks like a full life to us now is like a hard, dry seed, compared to how we will grow and blossom and fruit in our next life in God’s presence; think about it: our next life will be right there with God face to face; that’s Easter future

Easter present is today, but not in the sense of today being the calendar day or church celebration day of Easter; it is the day of our living out the reality of our resurrection life in the context of this life; this is the Easter of now; it is very important too, because in the recurring now of every moment of our lives we are touched both by Easter past and by Easter future; you and I, as Christians, are rightly known as ‘Easter people’ because we live out our lives with the knowledge that Jesus died and was resurrected for us, and because we live out our lives with the knowledge that one day we will be resurrected with him; because of that dual knowledge of what was done for us and of what will be done for us we live our lives, as we will affirm momentarily in the words of our Eucharistic Prayer A: “by him, and with him, and in him”; that’s Easter present, which lasts our entire lives

all of this means that we should live our lives differently than other people do; and we can live our lives differently because we have God’s “power, working in us, [that] can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine” (I hope you recognize this as the guiding prayer for this interim time that I prayed on my first Sunday with you, from the *Book of Common Prayer* p. 102, and continue to use on the days we use Morning Prayer to lead into Holy Communion); God’s power is working in us to give you and me resurrection life, right now

throughout the centuries, Christians have reminded each other that they are Easter people, grateful for the Easter past, hopeful for the Easter future, and living fully into the Easter present; and one of the ways we remind each other of this wonderful Good News is by greeting each other with these words: “Alleluia, Christ is risen!”; and then responding with these: “The Lord is risen indeed; alleluia!”; we don’t have to restrict these to liturgical usage, but use them as we are out and about, any time we greet other believers, reminding us, and them, that we are living as Easter people