

Year C, April 21, 2019
Easter Sunday
Christ Church, Mexia

Lent is over! We have our alleluias back, and much for which to be thankful!

During Lent though, we revisited the life of Jesus, saw how he lived. We know that in his humanity Jesus sometimes experienced anxiety and discomfort in knowing what he had to do to fulfill the will of God. Perhaps we can take some comfort in that knowledge – understanding that the pathway to healing that leads to wholeness is often difficult and painful. On Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday, we listened again to the pain of the final hours of his life and the crucifixion.

But today we celebrate the joy of the resurrection – his triumph over suffering and death. What are we to make of it? In part, I believe it is to reflect on how we should live our lives.

In her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, our own Brene Brown writes: “Wholehearted living is about engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, *No matter what gets done and how much is left undone (sound familiar?) I am enough.*” Let that sink in for a minute...

She continues: “It’s going to bed at night thinking, *Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn’t change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.*”

Wholehearted living is not a onetime choice. It is a process. In fact, I believe it’s the journey of a lifetime.” Though Brene does not suggest this is the kind of life that a Christian should live – she is writing to a much broader audience – I believe it has relevance for us because this type of life involves love, belonging and worthiness. And these are certainly things that are important to the Christian life.

She says that we cultivate worthiness by practicing courage, compassion, and connection in our daily lives. Courage is usually thought of today in terms of heroics, but the word derives from the root word *cor* – the Latin word for heart. So, originally it meant “to speak one’s mind by telling all one’s heart.” Certainly, Jesus displayed

this kind of courage. Mary Magdalene, the Apostles, and many others have displayed this kind of courage. So can we.

Compassion is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *cum*, defined as "to suffer with." Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist nun, writes in her book, *The Places That Scare You*: "In cultivating compassion we draw on the wholeness of our experience – our suffering, our empathy, as well as our cruelty and terror. It has to be this way. Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. (think about it) Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity." Think about how Jesus interacted with others, especially those whom he healed. Think about the way he responded to the thief on the cross.

Brene defines connection as: "the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship." Two things work against us today in achieving connection – technology and self-sufficiency. The connection we have through technology is not really a connection in this sense. It is an imposter that really encourages us to be meaner spirited. We have to let go of the feeling we can be self-sufficient; we can't. And we need to stop seeing the world as "those who need help" and "those who offer it." In all honesty, we are both. In Brene's words: "Until we can receive with an open heart, we are never really giving with an open heart. When we attach judgment to receiving help, we knowingly or unknowingly attach judgment to giving help." In Jesus' life, we see him both giving and receiving without distinction; we see him connecting with everyone.

So, I believe that we should try to live a "wholehearted life," practicing courage, compassion, and connection as we go. But we should also know that through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ we are made worthy of love and belonging.

Or, in the words of Br. Eldridge Pendleton, SSJE: "if we are to live richly and be the people God intends us to be, we have to give ourselves away. That is what the Gospel urges us to do. Live fearlessly, take risks, give to others without counting the cost. And, if we reorder our life this way, beyond comfort, beyond the anxiety of not having enough, God will take care of us abundantly. Do not be afraid." Try wholehearted living!

In the name of the one God, the Creator, the Word, and the Spirit.
Amen.