

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Easter Meditation: "With You Always"

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Change in our lives can be good. Change can be bad. Change can be easy or difficult. It can be something that we willingly choose for our life or it can be something that is forced upon us by the realities of life and the world around us. We may welcome it or we may fear it, for after all, there really are a number of unknowns when it comes to change, still the one thing we can count on is that it will happen. Change will come. Now change comes in many different forms, like when one leaves home for the first time. Or when we move to someplace new, when a new job comes our way, when we fall in love, when we say goodbye to a loved one, when we take any leap of faith, all of these things and more are shifts in our lives which can be scary, can bring about all sorts of emotions, can feel like those really BIG changes. Yet, I would venture to guess that if we look at any of those experiences we have gone through, any of the changes we have faced, we will find the constants which were there to see us through.

I remember when I was discerning this calling to ministry – a story I have shared with this congregation in the past. And I had gotten to the point where I knew this was the path I needed to follow. Still, this would come to be a big change in my life. Going from that path of pursuing a career in math education to parish ministry would be a big shift. It would mean more school. It would mean reimagining the plans that I had sort of worked out in my head – the plans of what life would look like. And while I knew it was the change that needed to happen, it was still a bit terrifying to take such a leap of faith. I mean, I knew I wasn't happy in the math education path I was on. It wasn't the path that was life-giving for me. So I knew this change was right and good and still it was scary to embrace it. So, as part of my decision making process, I went to my grandmother who was always such a stable constant in my life and I knew if anyone could help me navigate this change and find a way to embrace it, it would be her. She was just one of those people for me who, if they believed in you and they supported

you, you knew you could do anything! So I told her all about my discernment journey as she listened. And after I said all I had to say, I waited for her response. That's when she said a phrase which has stuck with me ever since. She simply said, "You are too young to be miserable for the rest of your life." And with that, I began my journey to ministry, knowing that the change would still have its challenges, but it was where my heart was. It was where my happiness was found.

Still, these words which my grandmother spoke did not only impact that decision and that change in my life. They have stayed with me and I recall them whenever a new change comes my way. These words have become an everlasting reminder from my grandmother to remember to seek the road where happiness will be found. And though she has since passed away, these words remain and in them, whenever I come to recall them, I feel all the love, all the care, all the encouragement, all the wisdom that she shared with me throughout her life and these words of advice have been a constant ever since. These are words which I pass on to anyone who is experiencing change or discerning the next steps in their lives for I find so much truth in them. I may have even shared this with some of you before because these words and the spirit of the woman behind them will forever impact how I live my life. These are words that, no matter how old you are, I believe still have truth. We are always too young to be miserable for the rest of our lives. In fact, at my graduation from seminary, all of us were asked for our favorite quotes to be displayed during the ceremony. Many of my classmates quoted famous theologians, authors, artists or movement founders. I quoted grandma.

When we experience change, we need something to hold on to – some constant which will be there to help us and guide us. For me, this is one of those constants. While my grandmother may no longer be in this world in the flesh, her spirit and love are forever felt in these words found in my heart. I'm sure we all can find some of those constants when we look inside ourselves – those things which will always help us meet change with courage and grace. It may not be a person or words of wisdom, but something which empowers and emboldens us for all that is to come. And no matter what those

constants may be for us, there is one more constant which we all share – a constant that has been there since the very first disciples – actually, it has been there since the very beginning of time. And that is the presence of Jesus. For Jesus is always with us, no matter what we are experiencing and no matter what changes we may encounter – Jesus is there.

In our scripture reading this morning, we are witnessing the next big change in the lives of the disciples. And I say the next big change, for the disciples have already been through a lot! Think back, approximately 3 years prior to where our scripture has us today, 3 years before the resurrection, to the time when Jesus called together these people to come and follow. To drop everything and follow him. To leave behind their families and follow him. To leave their careers – the trades in which they were trained, leave the only lives they knew behind and follow. That was a BIG change, no doubt about it, but they had Jesus. Now, in these days after the resurrection, where our scripture has us today, it is time for another change. Christ is risen, this is good news, and also it represents the next shift in their lives- that next big change to come their way. Because soon enough, Jesus will not be present in the same way he has been. Jesus will not be in the flesh with them anymore. The disciples must now go forth and spread this good news. In doing this, they are going from being primarily students and followers to becoming teachers and leaders. It's a growing up of sorts. A growing in faith for now they must go and proclaim. They cannot stay and just keep this message close to their hearts. They must go and share it with the hearts of the world. This must have been a BIG change with many different emotions being felt by the disciples – perhaps fear of the unknown and worry of the change about to unfold. Still, though change was coming, and though Jesus would not be with them in the same way, he was not gone. The presence of Jesus is there forever. And he reminds them of this wonderful and glorious truth with these words heard today: “and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Another quote which I hold onto in this life. Jesus will

always be there. May this constant truth bring us comfort and give us too the courage and grace to face all that life brings.

Beloved People of God, whenever life is hard and struggles are faced, whenever changes are encountered, I find a lot of comfort in those very last words of the Gospel of Matthew. This reminder, spoken by our Christ to his disciples, that he will be with them always, it is beautiful and powerful. However, these words are not only powerful because they are elegant words of comfort and companionship. They are powerful because they come not just from Jesus. They are that much more powerful because they come from the Risen Jesus. For here we find that, for Jesus, always truly means always. That nothing, not even death, can keep us apart. And so no matter what change we face, he is there. Our Risen Jesus said, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." These are words certainly worth remembering as we traverse all that life does bring.

So may we find the constants in our lives which will help us through all that comes. Whether it is found in wise words of a loved one or in the presence of our Risen Christ, may we hold these constants close to our hearts. May we turn to them in the times of challenges, changes, and trials, and may they see us through, remembering especially the words of Jesus, remembering that he is with us always. So be it and may it be so. Amen.