

You may be seated. Thank you for having me today. My name is Colin Mathewson, and I'm a co-pastor at St. Luke's in North Park. Father Mark is actually preaching down there today, so we'll hold his spot.

I'd like to introduce you first to a character from a Charles Dickens novel. Her name is Mrs. Jellyby, and this novel is Bleak House. The main characters were going to spend the night at her house, but before they could meet her, just going up the walkway, they found one of her children with his head stuck between the rails of a fence. They had to kind of help distract him and then as they walked inside the house there was a dark hallway and they kind of tripped on another one. Then there was more kids running around, they heard another kid fall down the stairs and they're all half clothed and sort of dirty. They're like, there's no adult here I'm sure but they get to the dining room and there was Mrs. Jellyby calm and composed and was dictating a letter to her daughter who had been doing that of course for so long that she just had ink everywhere.

In this, Mrs. Jellyby, her eyes had this far off sort of focus. The focus was on Africa because she spent 24/7 putting together, this is the 1850s in England, she was putting together a coffee plantation and a group of missionaries on the banks of the Niger River in Africa for the natives there. This Mrs. Jellyby of course was tending to all that, that required, the fundraising, just not to the children in her own house or the half-cooked meal that they served or some of her envelopes that were covered in gravy not too long afterwards. The title of this chapter was Telescopic Philanthropy.

I wonder though if we might draw our eyes a bit near to our own person and persons in our care, this Outreach Sunday. When we consider God's invitation to mission, to outreach, to evangelism, this part of that baptismal covenant that calls us to proclaim by, to proclaim the good news of God and Christ by word and example in this world.

What might it look like to practice resurrection closer to home? Practice resurrection, it's a lovely phrase right? I heard it first at the end of a poem by Wendell Berry, the poem titled Manifesto, the Mad Farmers Liberation Front. Now he gets a bit carried away at

times but I think his wildness is invigorating so I wanted to share a bit of that poem with you:

"So friends, every day do something that won't compute. Love the Lord, love the world, work for nothing. Take all that you have and be poor. Love someone that does not deserve it....Ask the questions that have no answers. Invest in the millennium, plant sequoias...As soon as the generalists and the politicians can predict the motions of your mind, lose it. Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go, be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection."

Kind of wild right? But no less wild than the idea of practicing resurrection, something as far as we know has only happened to one person, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Technically Lazarus was resuscitated (if I have to talk to anyone after the service about that distinction if you'd like).

But who are we to practice resurrection? Surely we have nothing to contribute to the possibility of resurrection in our lives and in the life of this world, right? Let's take out those red books turn to page 306, book of Common Prayer. Y'all ever do this at the 10:00 A.M. service, probably not right, so page 306. Let's look at the celebration of the baptism, this is the day we're celebrating Jesus' baptism. So on page 306 we're looking at the prayer for the thanksgiving of the water.

It says, "In water, your son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin and everlasting life." It says, "Through us," or "To lead us through the waters of death, through his death and resurrection." So it kind of seems like for we baptized folks, we are walking, we have walked with Christ through the waters of death and into the glorious light of the resurrected life in Christ, like past tense. Like that's happened, it is happening already. So I think we baptized folks can safely say we're practicing resurrection then right now as we speak. Now if you're not baptized and you're curious talk to Mother Rebecca after the service. It's a great Sunday to think about it.

Now with any type of practice we make lots of mistakes but with the help of the risen Christ, we have seen God's grace working in the world in wonderful ways, right? Haven't you seen God working in the world? Have you been a part of those times where you see God's grace working? Seeing some heads nod, maybe, have you seen God working in this world? Can you think of a time in your own life when you see God working that you've been a part of that? Can you think of those stories? Grab one of those stories. That there is that story you're invited to share to proclaim in the world. That's a gift God has given you to share.

In answer to that question when someone asks why can't you stop smiling or why did you just spend the night volunteering in an overnight shelter for asylum seekers, that's the answer you share with them. Evangelism doesn't need to be scary, but I know you know that because your priests are probably always talking about it, but this is Outreach Sunday, am I off topic? I don't think so because I have a story or two to share about outreach, about evangelism, about practicing resurrection. It's the story of St. Luke's, a church that was planted by All Saints Hillcrest in 1923 that peaked in the '80s and '90s and had its slow decline as a man from Sudan, a refugee resettled in San Diego, knocked on the office door of Father David Monzingo. Now if I have this story right, he actually came to St. James the Sunday before, was graciously welcomed and then invited afterwards to maybe check out St. Luke's just because he lived in the North Park area, so, good job. He then received that same welcome at St. Luke's and that encouraged him to bring his family and friends and over that following decade St. Luke's became a majority Sudanese congregation and a working-class congregation that could no longer pay its bills.

Now the hospitality involved in watching this predictable process take place over those years was remarkable. I mean it really was an instance of practicing resurrection alongside Christ because, though St. Luke's could no longer pay for itself by the late 2000s it was a vibrant place, it was a center of Sudanese culture, it was bristling with kids, it was alive again. St. Luke's was created in a central space of worship and community, for refugees who were

struggling to make it in this expensive city. St. Luke's was becoming a familiar place, like back home where these folks worshiped in Anglican churches because the British had colonized and missionized that place in the early 1900s, thanks to many Mrs. Jellyby's.

So, St. Luke's was vibrant but struggling to pay its bills and it necessarily relied on the graceful efforts of retired priests for several years. Then my wife Laurel and I showed up as their new co-pastors two years ago. I don't think we or Bishop Mathes or those who are involved in launching the North Park Project quite realized how poised St. Luke's was already, poised for growth, how alive it already was, how capable its leadership was, that sort of resurrection had already happened. We didn't come in, we focused on experiments with millennials who didn't come to church anymore, trying to think about new forms of church that might speak to them, but we quickly realized, there was something else to focus on too, to just help this already alive place find some path toward financial sustainability.

We were blessed to receive a five-year sort of subsidized time frame within which to do that. We just finished our second year. Now St. James was the first church in the diocese to make a significant financial commitment over five years to help us with this. For that we are deeply grateful. We're making some good strides so far, so in two years we've almost doubled attendance. So it's about 120 now on Sunday's and more than doubled our pledge base, so it's about \$100,000 right now. So we're on the right track.

Our job gets to be everyday to invite folks in to practicing resurrection in and around this property that we've been blessed with two blocks south from the heart of North Park, which is becoming an increasingly fancy place these days. City Heights High School students now grow and sell chard in the vacant lot next to the church. Refugee women will soon be trained to be cooks in our brand-new commercial kitchen thanks in part to the generosity of the women of St. James. Our homeless neighbors find a safe and welcoming place to rest, to use a computer to get their mail through the offerings of Uptown Community Service Center.

A Nazarene church plant that worships in our sanctuary between our two Sunday morning services bought us a serious playground, and our dream of making our parish hall into a place cool enough where North Park hipsters slowly coming into reality because we eventually want to offer a full scale restaurant with a sliding scale paying system so all people can dine with dignity in that place. The tables can be a space around which we can meet each other across lines of privilege and prejudice and watch our lives transform.

God is good, right? This is what resurrection looks like and what you are helping to make possible. Indeed, resurrection is possible in this time and place with God's help. God said from the heavens, "This is my son, I am so proud of you." That's what God says to each of us who share in Jesus' death and resurrection through baptism. We are those whom God has appointed for such a time as this. So go. Befriend your family, transform your vacant lot.

Make sure they're close to home so they'll be close to your heart, and watch your world, your life, and those around you bend deeper into the arc of God's irrepressible glory.