



# ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday after Easter  
April 12, 2015

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning comes from the Gospel:

The same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be unto you."

My grandmother's name was Esther, and she was named so because she was born on Easter. Naturally, at this season, I think of her, and her namesake, Esther, a beautiful young girl, who was selected to be a wife of the Persian King Ahasuerus. Like Moses, she entered the royal household while the identity of her faith and ethnicity remained secret. Despite competition from the established queen, Esther's sweetness and beauty made her a favorite among the wives and an influence on the King. Her father, Mordecai, was a noted figure in the kingdom because he had exposed a plot against the king, and he sat daily in the Gate of the Palace. Mordecai incurred the wrath of a powerful prince, Haman, who plotted not only to cause Mordecai to be hanged, but to follow that hanging by a systematic genocide of the Jews in exile.

With the scaffold for Mordecai's hanging built and the order that every Jew should be murdered issued, Mordecai turned to his daughter for help. Esther might be able to intercede, but to do so, she had to address the King without permission. In doing so, she could be inviting her own death. Unless he responded to her request by offering her his scepter, the penalty for speaking to the king without permission was death. Though her own identity was safe, and she might escape the fate of her family and her people by hiding herself, her father commanded her to stand up and speak out, to reveal herself, and to risk the King's wrath and a sentence of death. Of course she was fearful and anguished. Why would her family and her God expose her this way? She asked her father if this cup could not be taken from her, as Jesus would do in the Garden of Gethsamane.

Esther's father said to her, 'be at peace, have courage. God will deliver His people in His time no matter what you do, but you have been chosen at this minute to be the instrument of His love and good will, to be His tool of protection and redemption. He will save his people no matter what you do, but think about the consequence, to you, of shrinking away in fear and despair when

you have been chosen to be His angel. Esther gathered her courage, and her petition exposed Haman's plot, saving not only her father, but her nation.

I think the disciples looked upon the appearance of Jesus in Jesus in their hiding place after the Resurrection with the same trepidation and shame that plagued Esther. We get to see the Resurrection with perfect hindsight of History. In our minds, we see the disciples as gloriously happy to see their leader, friend, brother raised from the awful tomb. But in real time, at the moment that he materialized before them, we can imagine how they really felt. Thank God, but Oh No! Jesus whom we positioned for our political benefit until he was exposed and taken as a sacrifice, is here. The man we betrayed, and who we abandoned in the garden, is here. The man who told us He would rise in three days, but was disappointed by our disbelief and despair, is here. The brother that proclaimed His Kingdom from the Cross with His last breath, is here to see us cowering in fear and worried only about saving our skins. The Apostles saw Jesus appear before them, offering his wounds for their inspection, and we know their awe and joy were mixed with fear and especially with shame.

If we had been in the place of Jesus at that moment, the very last thing I can imagine that we would have said, was "Peace". Don't be afraid. Don't be ashamed. This family that has been torn apart by tribulation and violence is being restored. Your wounds are being healed by my wounds. Be not afraid of death, in my death I have given you life. Your trials in this world are not over, but they are not in vain. I see them, I know them, I bless them, I will heal them, I will glorify your sacrifices as the marks on my body have become the emblems of my glory. "Peace." Have the peace that passes all understanding.

In the quiet aftermath of a glorious Easter, when our doubts and problems reassert themselves in our lives, we can remember Esther, who risked

her life, faced her doubts and became the means of salvation for her people. We can look to our Lord, who is not vengeful, capricious or mean spirited, but who is deliberate in transforming His suffering and death so that we will be the beneficiaries of His Mercy and Love.

Even though, in the aftermath and high of a glorious Easter, we find ourselves still mired in the difficulties of our lives, problems of finance, of health, or of family; Jesus is saying to us, Peace. Have the peace that passes your understanding, the peace that comes from faith. Your troubles may be great, but I am greater still, and I have chosen you to be the blessing to the people that you love. Come to the altar, and I will fill your life with my life. What was impossible for you to bear alone, will be transformed by the grace of my love within you. You may have suffering, but your suffering will not be in vain. I will bless you for offering up your suffering, and you will be a blessing to those around you; the ones who know and love you, and the strangers who will find my grace because your courage is my instrument to bring them home. Peace. Peace be unto you. Have the peace that passes all understanding.

***In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen***