

In just a couple of weeks, our Child Development Center will close down for a few days while our teachers prepare for a new year, and new children in each classroom. And then in September, we who spend time in this building we hear that there's been a shift... we'll know that there are new toddlers in the building. Because to be honest, in early September, we hear a lot of crying. Some of these kids are doing a new things for the first time, and they are tired, and scared, and sad.

But if you wander the halls of the CDC, you'll hear a refrain. Over and over again, you'll hear our loving teachers saying these words: "You're OK. Mommy loves you. Mommy is at work. Mommy's coming back."

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It's a simple reassurance. And of course it can't take away all the tiredness and fear and sadness, but it's the truth. And so it's what our teachers offer along with their compassion and their presence.

These days, friends, I sometimes feel like one of those kids. I'm tired and scared and sad.

I'm tired of gun violence.

I'm tired of hateful, mean-spirited, and racist rhetoric being treated as normal.

I'm tired of the inhumanity I see at our border, where people are coming to us for *help* and are treated like criminals. Treated worse than we in Seattle would even treat our dogs.

I'm tired of walking by tents and needles and hungry people and noticing that I'm used to it.

I bet you are tired and scared and sad about these things, too, among other things.

So we come today to worship, children of God, and we cry out. And we find ourselves in good company.

Because God's people have always felt this way.

Take our friend Abram. God promised him descendants and a whole nation of people – and years go by, and Abram is watching his biological clock tick away, and he’s starting to feel a little skeptical about God’s plan.

You can’t blame him. It can get hard to keep hoping and trusting when we are tired, and scared, and sad, and doubting. We don’t want to wait any longer...when we see such brokenness around us, we can feel like little children, who *want* to trust their parents – but wonder, in the back of their mind, if maybe they really have been abandoned.

In those dark moments, we cry out for God. And that’s when God comforts us, and says: “You’re OK. Jesus loves you. Jesus is at work. Jesus will come back.”

This is the simple truth that comforts and gives us hope.

Jesus loves us. Jesus is at work. Jesus will come back.

And when you think about it, that’s really what we are saying every time we say these words in the Eucharist:

“Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”

This simple statement is the comfort and reassurance that God’s love for us is never-ending. God loved us yesterday, and loves us today, and will love us tomorrow.

See, when we say, “Christ has died,” we aren’t just making a historical statement. No, these proclaim that God has chosen to come into this broken world in flesh and blood. Has chosen to walk among us, and to know intimately about our suffering and our pain. Jesus knows exactly what tired and scared and sad feels like.

And that’s especially important for us to remember when we feel alone.

The writer of Hebrews was writing to the second-generation of Christians – people whose parents or grandparents had probably been on the ground with Jesus. But these people are living later, during a time of persecution. They had expected Jesus to be back by now, and they’re getting skeptical, too. Their faith is on shaky ground.

So the writer of Hebrews does what we do every time we worship. They tell a story about the past. They remind the people about Abraham and Sarah, people who came before us and followed God's command, who trusted and obeyed, and who eventually received everything God had promised.

I think it's funny that the writer of Hebrews commends Abraham over and over for his great faith, because the irony is that of course Abraham doubted! He doubted as much as any of us do.

But that's what we all do when we remember the saints, isn't it? Not just the saints in the Bible, but think about all the people you have known who have taught you about faith – your parents and grandparents and friends and mentors who have died.

We often think back fondly and we talk about their amazing faith; how they lived and in the hope and joy of God's love. How that faith strengthened them to be incredible workers in God's kingdom; and how it made them unafraid of death, when it was their time. We tell these stories because they inspire us and make us want to be better...to be more faithful.

But the truth is that all of those saints were also sinners. They were doubters. They were tired, and scared, and sad sometimes, too.

The truth is that all these stories are really about *God's* faithfulness. We see what God has done through others, and it gives us strength and hope that God can work in us, too.

That's what we are talking about when we say, "Christ has died." We are remembering all the ways God has broken in to people's lives and been present with us throughout time.

But since death does not get the final word, we don't end there. We also cry out, "Christ is risen!"

Or in other words, "Jesus is at work."

Jesus is at work, right now, in the world around us and with us. The kingdom of God is breaking in to this world here, and now, and we see glimpses of it every single day. I know you can find examples of how love conquers hatred and how

good is stronger than evil. I know you see generosity and profound sacrifice and heroism in the face of tragedy. Those are stories of Jesus at work among us.

As Christ's body – the Church is called to get to work, too.

This week our denomination met for its triennial churchwide assembly. Now, I don't want to spend too much time navel-gazing or patting ourselves on the back, but it's also really important that you know what this church is doing in the world, but it does matter that as a church body, we align ourselves with where we believe Jesus is at work in the world.

This past week the ELCA voted to become a sanctuary denomination, committing to shelter and support and protect people who seek safety.

And we approved a resolution apologizing to our siblings of African descent – repenting for the Church's role in racism, slavery, and white supremacy. And we resolved to continue fighting those systems in our world and in our own institution.

We adopted a social statement on sexism and gender discrimination. And on Friday morning, hundreds of ordained women processed in to begin worship, celebrating 50th anniversary of the ordination of women, and the 10th anniversary of our church ordaining gay, lesbian, and bisexual pastors.

We did this not just to congratulate ourselves, but to be reminded that the Word of God is alive.

To acknowledge that Jesus is STILL at work. We still have so much to learn from Scripture. Our understanding of how Christ's Body is moving in the world must always be changing and growing...because this is not a historic faith set in a dusty old book. We don't worship a dead savior, but a living one.

I think this is what Jesus means when he says to stay alert. If we proclaim Christ is risen – then we, his body, must rise, and show up in all the places we know Jesus would show up. At the border, and on the streets, and in prisons, and in the halls of justice.

If Jesus is alive and we are his body, then it is our task to go to work. To strive for justice and peace. To share the good news. To serve others. To love our neighbor.

And we do this with the hope and the faith of our ancestors...with hope and faith that Jesus is already ahead of us in this work.

And when it gets tiring, and scary, and too sad to bear...we receive these words of comfort:

“Do not be afraid. Have *no* fear.”

Jesus tells us to banish fear from our lives, because he knows that *fear* is the real thief. Fear robs us of the life God intends. It robs us of community. It robs our neighbor of the gifts we have to offer.

Fear wants to divide us; when Jesus wants to connect us.

Fear wants control; but Jesus wants freedom.

Fear tells us that we need to draw all our possessions and treasures closer to ourselves; and Jesus tells us to give all of it away.

Fear is a lying, cowardly thief.

It is that thief that tries to separate us God and from one another and convince us that we are alone. And fear can be powerful and seductive, especially when we are tired and scared and sad.

But there is something more powerful than that – and it is hope. The hope we have because we already know that yesterday, and today, and tomorrow belong to our loving God, and we are held in loving hands.

Today through water and story and meal, we are fed with enough of this good news to sustain us, so that we can rise up and head right back into the world.

We may cry (some of us more than others). We may get tired, and scared, and sad.

But the simple truth is that we're OK. Jesus loves us. Jesus is at work. Jesus is coming back. Or in other words,

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Thanks be to God.