

Easter A 2017
The Rev. Ian Burch
St. Mark's Episcopal Church | Milwaukee, WI
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I meant to write this sermon about a week ago. I sat and looked at the blank computer screen for about 45 minutes as terrible idea after terrible idea wrote itself on the front of my skull. I went and got a snack, as one does. I played a video game on my computer. I read the news about bombs and manhunts and other geopolitical unrest. And then I came back to the little black cursor on the white page. Nothing.

So I went into the yard. And I started weeding. Some of you know that we bought an old house last year. The house was built in 1891, and I think that's perhaps the last time that anyone did anything with the yard. The lawn is 80% dandelions and 20% grass. So I got my screwdriver and started plucking the dandelions from the lawn one by one.

You'd be amazed at the ubiquity of weeds. They seem to find their way into every unused corner of the world. They push up through the turf; they spiral around the fence posts; they even find a way to grow in the cement cracks or the spaces between bits of gravel. After two hours, I had quite a handy pile of weeds, though, alas, no sermon. After two hours, and in absolute refutation of the laws of physics, there were just as many dandelions as when I started.

As I hunched over this terrible lawn that we, perhaps mistakenly, purchased, I realized something: these weeds, my brothers and sisters, are Christian hope. These weeds, are Resurrection.

That world out there tries to eradicate hope in any way it can. Plucking, spraying, poisoning. But I guarantee, and I've become a bit of an expert on this subject, that if you go into your yard, right now and give it a good look, you will find at least one tenacious and holy weed that simply will not give up.

The world said that Jesus had to die. The State said that Jesus had to die. The religious authorities said that Jesus had to die. The rules of our civic and financial life that so often disenfranchise the poor, the different, the rebellious, the threatening—these rules said that Jesus had to die.

But it is not within the mind of God to let death win. And so we have an Empty Tomb. And we have an Easter morning. And our world has a hope that cannot be doused by despair. Christian hope is scrappy. Christian hope is EVERYWHERE.

On the cover of your bulletins is a picture of the Resurrection window that stands, gloriously, in the back of our church. The picture was taken and donated by Mark Heffron, and this is the second year it's graced our Easter morning bulletin. The glass shows Jesus flying out of the grave; escaping death to the astonishment of the angels. It depicts a phoenix, the Greek letters

Alpha and Omega, the butterfly free from its cocoon—all ancient Christian symbols of Resurrection. I noticed something else, though. At Jesus' feet, modest and persistent, is a little orange-y flower. I'm certain that the artist meant for it to be a respectable, high-quality flower, but I choose to believe that it is a dandelion. Christian people know that death and despair are no match for the triumph of Christ in this world. Weeds are good news, my friends.

Christ is not Risen just in the easy, sunny, fertile places in the world. Christ is Risen in the hurt, in the hardship, in the hopelessness. There is no situation that cannot be redeemed; there is no soul so far gone that it cannot be healed; there is no darkness so profound that it cannot be eradicated by the Christ that breaks graves, that shatters stone, that casts down the mighty and lifts up the lowly.

Christian hope is a weed and no power in this world will keep it down. Not today. Not at this feast. Not at this Alleluia. Not at this day of Resurrection.

The stone is gone. The dead are alive. The Christ is alive. The hope for the world is real.

Lilies are nice, but the next time you see a tenacious little dandelion clinging to a sidewalk crack, I want you to bend down and thank it for reminding us all about the beauty of Christian hope.

Go, my friends. Be like the weeds. Get out and proclaim the good news of our God just like our Sister Mary Madeleine to every corner of this world that needs it. Go and remind the parched places in the world that despair is not the end.

God brought us here. God healed us. God will feed us. God will send us out into the world to sing Alleluia, to tell everyone that Christ is Risen. Be like the weeds. Bring today's hope to every crack and crevice of this hurting world. Amen.

