



# race Church

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Calkins  
Rector

## I WILL ARISE AND GO NOW

### Sermon for Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016

*Readings:* Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12

*Sermon text:* The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. Psalm 118:14

The story of Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea is the only Old Testament story that is mandated by the Book of Common Prayer to be included in the readings of the Easter Vigil service. All of the other readings are optional. Not this one. Why?

This is the first line from W.B. Yeats early poem, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*. (It is appropriate to remember the great Irish poet on this hundredth anniversary of the Irish Uprising.) Let me read the entirety of the short poem now; listen with what St Benedict called the ears of your heart.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

I hear it in the deep heart's core.

What is it Yeats hears? The lake lapping, yes, even in the midst of city traffic. But something more, a subtle and insistent call, a longing, for the peace that comes dropping slow, the peace that will come as the poet lives, tending a small garden, in the solitude and beauty of the lake isle.

Think of your heart's deep core. What kind of peaceful sanctuary have you built for yourself there—or imagined? Is it a far off dream, never to be realized because of the insistent demands of city and family, work and world? Or is there really a place you can go, even in the midst of city and family, work and world, a place where there is peace and beauty, rest and joy? Is there an isle of Innisfree in your heart?

I hope so. And I will go further and say I think God has put into all hearts a longing for a special place, a place of quiet beauty and joyful tranquility. Enter into my rest, God whispers. Enter into my peace. It is the song of the Spirit you hear singing in your heart. But how do we get there? A journey is needed, the hero's journey. It must of course have dangers and challenges, it must have rivers to ford and mountains to climb. You have heard of this journey in a thousand forms. Yea, though I walk through the shadow of death....

Where will you find the strength and guidance to walk this long way?

May I introduce another exemplar, from a more recent American cultural context than Yeats? Consider the late great James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, "the hardest working man in show business." Some of you here remember his concerts—or have watched a recent biopic—how he would give it everything he had, dancing, singing, working up a mighty sweat. And then toward the end he would start to weaken. He would sink to his knees. His sidekick would come over, drape a cape over his shoulders and begin to help him offstage. "Thank you, everyone, that's our show, let's hear it for Mister James Brown." But no, JB would throw off the cloak, get back to center stage, let go one more time, please please, soul power. Spirit power. Rise up. Rise up in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Alleluia, he is risen. He is risen indeed, alleluia.

This is our victory song, the song we sing with special joy and feeling this Easter Day. Alleluia, he is risen, he is risen indeed, alleluia. As the Psalmist sings: "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation" (Ps 118:14).

And if he is risen, we will rise. If he has conquered suffering and death, we will conquer suffering and death. Where he has gone, we will go.

He doesn't matter where you go, how hard your life, Jesus has been there, and he can lead you home. You can be dead—or feel that way—but Jesus has been there. As we say in the Apostles' Creed: "he descended to the dead." There, according to the first letter of Peter "he made a proclamation to those spirits in prison... proclaiming the gospel even to the dead, so that, though they have been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does" (1 Peter 3:19; 4:6).

You are not alone on your hard hero's journey. The Good Shepherd, the great guide, is with you. Say it with me; the words are in your heart:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they

comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Wherever you are on your life's journey, Jesus the great good shepherd is there to help strengthen and guide you. He is not someone who is only a story from the past; he is not to be found among the dead but the living, as the angels said to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the other women. Go, you will meet him on the mountaintop, and in the valley.

He is not only in heaven, having ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is with us always, even now, in the Spirit. What a wonderful triune God we worship, who is and was and always will be!

Come, the Spirit of the Lord calls us, each by name, come follow me, over the tumult of the waters, over the rocks and desert places of our life, down into the valley and up to the top of the mountain. Come, Christian, follow me. Can you hear the song of the Lord with the ears of your heart?

If you do, if you long to follow the Way of Christ, then rise up and join the millions who have already gone ahead, who live in the Spirit as God does. Come to the rest and peace of God which awaits all those who will answer the call and follow. Take this day as another chance to live anew, to stand up again, straighten up your shoulders, throw off the cloak of anxiety and fear, guilt and sin. If he is risen, so can we rise and go now, following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to the land of peace and plenty, to that place we know in our deep heart's core.

"The Lord is my strength and my song," let your heart sing. Let your spirit rejoice. Alleluia, he is risen; he is risen indeed, Alleluia.

Amen.

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