Homily Sunday April 27 2025 KM

Come, Holy Spirit, and add a blessing to these words of my mouth, and a blessing to the meditations in our hearts. Amen.

Praise and peace to you, friends and friends and all of the community and all of the creatures up at Good Courage Farm.
It is a blessing to be with you, and to know that the risen Christ is in our midst, this Saint Saint Thomas Sunday.

This is a feast in the churches of the East, Saint Thomas Sunday.
And I have brought you a Saint Thomas Sunday gift. It is a jar of honey.
It is a very small jar of honey, so we're going to have to share it like we have to do all God's good gifts.
And it is not from the farm. But I brought it to you as a gift.

I have a gift for you and an invitation. And in between, a crazy resurrection-based proposition.

This honey is fireweed honey. It is not from our farm. It is from the Cascade Mountains of Washington State.
And I brought it to share and to share a story of it.
The farm takes its name, Good Courage, from a beloved place in God's good creation up there in the Cascade Mountains, a sacred place where people go to reconnect their faith with God's good creation.
It's called Holden Village. It's up there in the mountains. It's the most remote, continuously occupied place in the contiguous 48 United States.
It's pretty remote. And people go there to pray and to live in community.
And it is dear to my wife, Jen, and me. And it has shaped who we are and how we look for God in creation.

And in 2015, it was almost destroyed.
In 2015, it was a year of almost unending wildfires.
And I remember that year because Jen and I were living in California. And

California was on fire.
But more so, Washington State was ablaze. And there was a fire that year called the Wolverine Fire.
And it burnt, swept through the Cascade Mountains, destroying everything in its path.
And only by heroic efforts and the grace of God did a tiny postage stamp of earth, which is Holden Village, survive that fire.
By heroic efforts that I can tell you were at coffee hours sometime.
People who stayed there to protect the place and to protect all the creatures who sheltered there during that fire.

But when that fire swept through, leaving Holden Village, what was left behind was utter devastation.
And the community of people who had lived there in Holden Village were evacuated, dispersed, grief-stricken, and afraid.
But some intrepid people became a group known as the Forerunners.
And they returned to see Holden Village still standing.
They returned to do the back-breaking, heart-breaking work of cleaning up.
And what they found was an entire region changed.
The ash was heart-deep, if you can imagine.
It wasn't a fire like we would expect might burn every few years in the Cascades, a place designed to be transformed regularly by fire.
But because of the way human beings have impacted our environment, there aren't healthy fires very often anymore.
There are only super fires.
And they leave almost nothing left for nature to work with.

But one day, months after the Forerunners had returned to try to restore Holden Village, some stories came down from that high place, from the people who were there.
They said that one day after months, they were taking a little school bus that goes from Lake Chelan up the winding mountain road to get to Holden Village, still standing.
And on the way, someone gasped, because out the window of that little

bus, they saw something green.
And the 15 people who were on that bus poured out the door and fell to their knees around a seedling.
And they rode the rest of the way singing praises to God.

And they sent word of this story that a seedling had grown up out of the ash to all of the people who had been watching on the satellite images and praying for months.
They sent word, and we could hardly believe that any of it could be true.
The first thing I said to my wife, Jenna, is that we have to go and see.

And so we did.
It wasn't until 2017 that they had a regular summer, but Jenna and I went back there to preach and teach in 2017.
We got on that same little school bus there at the lake, and it started to wind its way up to Holden Village.

And I have to tell you, the whole landscape was scars.
Charred trunks of dead trees reaching up to the sky.
Where there had been evergreen forests with ferns, waterfalls, and countless songbirds, there was only silence and shades of gray.
But then we rounded the bend and came into the creek valley, where River Creek flows.
And as we came around, the entire view changed, and everything that we could see was awash in the color pink.
Spires of magenta and purple and light pink and green-like color gold filled that valley.
And it was fireweed.

Fireweed is God's resurrection gift to places that have known destruction of the fire.
Fireweed is one of the first things that comes back.
And its roots stabilize the ashy hillsides so that they don't just collapse in avalanches into the river valleys below.
A single fireweed plant makes 80,000 seeds.

And so from that first seedling to a valley awash in color and life, it's just a matter of patience.
And when you have enough fireweed, then you, the people of the mountains, can send to the people of the prairie fireweed honey.

You cannot taste this except from a landscape that has known the devastation and destruction of death.
So I brought this so that we can taste and see that God is good and maybe taste and see a little bit about what resurrection might taste like.
But we'll share this at coffee hour.

John's gospel near its very end closes with these words: Jesus did many other signs for his disciples so that they might believe. They're not recorded in this gospel.

Friends, I'm here to say that I think creation is filled to overflowing with signs of the risen Christ.
And I know that we are blessed especially as folks these 2,000 years later who never got to put our hands in Jesus' side and we never got to touch the wounds and we never got to see his body on the other side of the tomb.

But is it actually true that we have not seen the resurrected Christ?
I think we have.
I feel in my bones that I have and I think you might have too.
Because if in the creed we confess that all things were made through Christ, if the opening of John's gospel says there was not one thing that came into being without him, then surely in him every created thing knows resurrection.

In ecology, whether people are studying it or trying to practice ecological living, there is a term of art for places like that valley so full of fireweed, for places where things are being renewed in spite of the wounds—islands in the middle of the Pacific where they lost all of their biodiversity and yet get something, one cascading event, maybe a bird with one seed, has

transformed everything.
There's a term of art, and it calls these places resurrection zones.

That valley where Holden Village stands is a resurrection zone.
And I dare say, it's maybe presumptuous, but I think our tiny little farm out in Hutchinson is a resurrection zone.
And actually, come to think of it, I think the whole of God's good creation is a resurrection zone, and you are here to see it.

I just wanted to see it.
I just wanted to go back to Holden Village.
And I have to ask myself a question that I wish I could ask Thomas, the disciple.
I want to ask myself some questions.
Why did I need to see it?
I couldn't take people's word for it.
I couldn't take the story and have it be enough for me to believe and hope.
What did I need to see?
Did I need to see the seedling?
Did I need to see the fireweed?
Did I need to see the ash?

What did Thomas need to see?
He needed to see the risen Lord, and yet somehow he also needed to see the wounds.
He needed to see the scars.

And I wonder, why are we so like Thomas?
Why are we so like Thomas in our relationship, perhaps, with Christ, and also in our relationship with the created world made through him and by him?
Why can't we just take the word of people who live out on islands in the Pacific that are being swallowed up by rising sea levels?
Why can't we take the word of the scientists who say things are changing in ways that may be unrecognizable for generations to come?

I don't know.
We just need to see for ourselves.
And aren't we seeing enough?
The drought. The flood. The fire.

But I also want to ask us a question connected to our vocation of creation care as Christians:
How can we be more like Thomas?
How can we say, I need to see it?
I want to witness it—wounds and glory and awe.
I want to encounter the risen Christ in the good world that he came to redeem.

And when we do find seedlings on our farms or in the valleys of the mountains, how can we, like Thomas, fall to our knees recognizing the resurrecting power of God and say, My Lord and my God?

Because resurrection seems to hold both the scar and the salvation together.
And we can only know that when we witness both.

I see the scars where we live at Good Courage Farm.
I witness them.
The scars of industrial agriculture, right?
I see the way the empire has invited us to be in relationship with the land.
I see the fields that are tilled again and again and again until there's no life left in the soil.
I see the places where there used to be birdsong.
There used to be all of God's diverse creatures.
And now there's just one thing managed with pesticides and herbicides.

I see the river across the street from the farm, the Crow, that feeds our watershed.
And I know now that it is forever desecrated with chemicals that won't go away.

But that river is forever scarred.
But I know now that it is not beyond God's resurrecting power.
Because I see that renewal every day on our farm.

We don't have fireweed. But we have fireflies.
And they too are signs of resurrection.
They can only thrive in places where the water and the plants and the soil are enjoying restored health.
And so even though the fields all around us are silent and dark at night, come to Good Courage Farm.

And here's the invitation: Come and see.

You can touch the earth in the neighboring fields.
You can put your hand on that side of the fence and feel that there is no life left.
But you can also hold out your hand.
And that tiny light that God has given us to show us the way will come and bless you—that tiny firefly.

A sign, surely, of Christ's resurrected self in and among and beyond us in this world.

And so if we pray to Christ, whom we call the firstborn of the dead, we can say for sure it wasn't a one-time thing.
It wasn't a one-off miracle.
It wasn't a one-time occasion in that locked upper room that we didn't get to witness.

No, Christ's resurrection was the beginning.
And we are all participating in it.

Even now, it is a pattern and a promise.
And we can live in ways that share that promise.

The wounds and the glory are all one truth.
The scars and the saving grace are all one body.
And you can see it all around you.

So if you're looking for signs, dear friends, that the created world that Christ came to redeem needs healing, look around.
And if you need proof that it can be renewed and is being renewed, look again.
And you'll see fireweed.
And you'll see fireflies.
And you will taste the unimaginable sweetness of God's goodness.

And if you need a pattern for those things to all be true at once, look for the body of the resurrected Christ present with us every day—wounded and yet wonderfully alive.

Amen and alleluia. Amen and alleluia.