



# ST. MARK'S ON THE CAMPUS

## Episcopal Church & Student Center

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The Rev. Christine Grosh, Deacon  
Sermon for Veteran's Day, Year C, Proper 27  
St. Mark's on the Campus  
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Sitting in a psychology of religion class, I was figuratively on the edge of my seat all 10 weeks, waiting for the professor to announce that There is no God. That religion is a function of brain chemistry and nothing more. I was sort of disappointed that he didn't say that, but I was too chicken to bring up the topic myself. We do know that brain chemistry influences religious feelings and experiences.

So here we are this week, confronted with the resurrection. The hereafter. God being a God of the living, even after death. How much of that do you believe? I was questioning that myself recently. The lesson from Job: "I know that my Redeemer lives, he will stand on the earth, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side and my eyes shall behold." Was it just too much serotonin? How about Jesus? He talks as though resurrection is a fact! The lessons are preparing us for the end of this life, for the hereafter. For the resurrection.

In a few minutes at the end of the Nicene Creed, I will make the sign of the cross over myself where it says, "resurrection of the dead". In the Apostles' Creed it says, "resurrection of the body". How have I come to profess such an idea? Have I arrived at that belief on my own? Not at all. The church taught me this idea. Many days, I question the whole idea of resurrection. It's not one of the main tenets of my personal belief. But, let me tell you of an experience that showed me that I really do believe:

A certain church had a tradition that the first Sunday of each new year, they would remember the prominent people who had died in the previous year. They were very intentional in teaching: people become fertilizer for trees after death. They want to confront our society. They believe that the notion of life after death is a delusion that keeps people from being realistic about death.

I followed along, engaged in the music and the teaching, but felt worse and worse as the service went on. After awhile, I felt this deadness creeping up on me. I had the feeling that the linoleum on the floor had more spirit than the people in the room. I wanted to stand up and say, "WHAT ABOUT THE ANGELS, ARCHANGELS AND ALL THE COMPANY OF HEAVEN!!!!" So, what do you know, I do believe! Perhaps I hold this belief because it has vitality, while the other idea produces a dull feeling inside.

What do you think about the gospel... "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. God is not the god of the dead but of the living. HHHMMMM...just what does that mean? Perhaps it's talking about the part of us that is eternally in relationship with God. The unseen part of us that is not limited by time or space? Some days I can accept that possibility. Other days I just want to deal with the here and now.

Many believers expect to be united with all of their family members in the hereafter. Let me tell you about a dream reported in Carl Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Jung's father had been dead 26 years. In a dream, the father came and asked Carl for advice about getting along with his wife, Carl's mother. Carl reported that he was flattered by the dream and took it that his father was acknowledging his professional accomplishments. His parents had had a conflicted marriage. Well, 6 months later, Carl's mother died unexpectedly. He reports that that changed his understanding of the dream. The mother's death made him believe that the dream was a communication that the dead father was anticipating the arrival of the mother and he would therefore be needing some better skills for relating to her.

Toward the end of Carl Jung's life, he was criticized for not believing in God. There is a television segment from 1959 or 1960 where an interviewer asks him. He says, no, he doesn't believe. He knows there is God. He implies that belief isn't the right word. In another interview, he explains that God is a fact, a psychological fact.

Here's another dream reported by Irvin Yalom, a contemporary psychologist and writer. He said his mother, who is no longer in the physical world, had shown up in several dreams. Being a modern person who carries the western idea of individual identity, he said to the mother in a dream, "This is my life, what are you doing here?" The response, "Mamas can have dreams too." What do I make of that? That there is more to this life than we can understand materially and rationally. Every week I am thankful for St. Mark's because I need to acknowledge the importance of the unseen. I need to be part of a worshipping body. You provide great nourishment for me! You provide me with wonderful community prayer and experience of the Holy Spirit.

Here's another story: Madeleine L'Engle is one of the saints who died this year. She wrote a sweet little book called, "*a two-part invention, the story of a marriage.*" L'Engle was a writer and actress. Working in New York City, she would walk late at night, this was the 1930s, and she found an Episcopal Church open all night and she would stop in. She said at that time she wouldn't have dreamed of going to a church service! She described herself as having been trained in the Anglican Virtues. She pointed out that these virtues were all self protective. Listen to these! They might be familiar! Do not show emotions. Do not grieve. Do not ask for help. And, do it yourself." Oh my gosh! I was trained in Anglican Virtues without even knowing what they were! She said, "It would be a long time before I learned that the Anglican Virtues and Anglican theology are barely compatible! Isn't that a great line?"

It takes time sitting in church, letting Christian values seep in and replace the old values. The teaching about resurrection, the hereafter, the angels, archangels and all the company of heaven tell me that God is working to bring about growth and transformation all of our lives, even beyond this physical world.

Let me tell you my own experience this year. A 59-year-old man died. I had not seen him in 25 years. Six months after his death I received a spiritual communication. He was very present in a sense of body, voice and scene. The scene was 13th & L St, by Scott's Pancake House. Remember that? It was the scene of hurt feelings. He said, "I didn't mean to hurt you." I am thankful for that apology. The communication meant something to me personally but I also took it to mean that God is continuing to give him opportunities to grow even after his death.

My recent reflections for my own journey have included a measure of self-doubt. I became aware that there were some issues of belief that I had never submitted to prayer. I had formulated some positions based on my own thinking...a God-given ability, but nevertheless, limited! I hope you know in our church, that is absolutely fine! We talk about the 3 legged stool: the legs are scripture, tradition and reason, and those are all filtered through our life experience. We're all in the process of engaging what the church is teaching and attempting to apply it in our lives. I feel reassured that it's a life-long process and even beyond our physical life we can still grow into the knowledge and love of the Lord and whatever God has for us in the way of healing and fulfillment.

Of course, I'd like to get as much in this life as possible! In chi gong, we do this motion, called a wash. I think of it as a body scan, checking for tension, emotion or body energy. I decided to try this scan for spiritual energy. Doing this, a memory came. Many years ago at Cursillo, one of the presenters used a poem, credited to Queen Elizabeth the first. Thanks to Steve Buhler for finding the poem for me. Perhaps the words will resonate with your spirit as they did mine.

*Christ was the Word that spake it.*

*He took the bread and brake it.*

*And what his word doth make it*

*That I believe and take it.*