

St. Philip's Episcopal Church  
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

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There's nothing like a good snow storm! While I absolutely love snow, I realize there are those who abhor the winter season and all of its possibilities. After all, snow and its counterparts- ice and sleet- are often messy, dangerous and downright annoying. Some of you have had your fill of snow and the first day of Spring, March 20 this year, cannot arrive soon enough. However, for others these snowstorms have brought winter bliss!

Snow has a way of calming the earth. Snow blankets everything in sight and shuts down the business that we have become addicted to. However, for me, the snow always drives me out of my home and into the streets for a casual stroll. Snow crunches underfoot and the wind indiscriminately cast moist flakes of heavenly manna against the skin. The trees in their dormant state take up new life as the white fluffy substance rests on branches and drapes the needles of evergreens. And then there is the joy that comes with meeting another snow lover who is out and about. Eyes meet with a twinkle and a smile fills the face as each one knows the other's secret passion.

Outside of the danger, snow in and of itself is quite beautiful. This storm came with atmospheric conditions that created "thunder snow". I happened to catch a glimpse of this phenomenon around 4:30 a.m. Saturday morning. Snow was rapidly falling and the sky pulsed with two quick flashes of light followed by a rumble of thunder. Fascinating! Although I had heard meteorologist talk about the possibility, this was my first encounter. Lightning and thunder, a common occurrence during spring and summer rains may also accompany a winter storm, unusual as it may be. It felt out of place. But, I took it as a sign of God's presence showing up in an unexpected situation. In the midst of a quiet snowfall lightning appeared.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 15:3-5a, he writes "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared...". Paul goes on to list those who saw the risen Christ: Cephas, the twelve, more than five hundred brothers and sisters, James, all the apostles and finally Paul himself. Paul reminds the people of Corinth that he was once a persecutor of Christians. But Christ appeared to him and his life turned upside down. He goes on to write, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain."

We are what we are. We are who we are. And that is where Christ meets us. God's grace seeps into our lives sometimes without notice and at other times with a dramatic entrance. We might think of this latest snow storm as a moment of grace. Our plans may have been interrupted, but look around to see what you might otherwise do. Families forced to stay home might recapture a sense of togetherness, couples might rekindle a love, who doesn't have a good book they've not had time to read, or a project that may need just a few hours to complete. But whether we are stuck inside or fervently exploring the outdoors, let us pause and give thanks to God.

Stop and consider the many blessings that are taken for granted on a daily basis. In each blessing is evidence of the risen Christ. Christ who bears love, and hope and peace. He still appears to us today, in the clap of thunder snow, a rainbow, the smile of a stranger; the unexpected grace that oils our lives comes to us with a price that has already been paid. The very least we can do is pause and pray, not just on a snowy day but each and every day of our lives. Snow storms are not in vain when we use the time to give honor and glory to God.

Scripture appointed for today from the Revised Common Lectionary  
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Isaiah 6:1-13

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11