



Good morning. The Lord is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Friends, siblings, people of St. Mary's:

I had intended and hoped to bring you a very different message than I bring this morning. I had hoped to speak of the Gospel today, and how **doubt** is, I believe, an almost essential part of our journey to a full and vibrant life of faith. That our doubts and our questions are nothing to hide from, but to welcome in, and to move through, in our quest to understand in ever deeper ways, what it is to be followers of Jesus.

But that message will need to wait. Instead, the message I bring this morning is one that I bring with a heavy heart, but one that we cannot hide from.

On Wednesday of this past week, Linda Nichols, the Anglican Church of Canada's Archbishop and Primate (what we in The Episcopal Church would call "The Presiding Bishop") announced the following:

"Archbishop Mark MacDonald has resigned as National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop and has relinquished the exercise of ministry due to acknowledged sexual misconduct, effective April 20, 2022.

This is devastating news. The sense of betrayal is deep and profound when leaders fail to live up to the standards we expect and the boundaries we set. Our hearts hold compassion for human frailty and space for repentance while we also ache with the pain that such betrayal causes first to the complainant; then to so many others and to the life of our Church.

First and most importantly our prayers must be for the complainant whose life has been affected by Mark's actions. The betrayal of trust by someone in such a prominent role of leadership will require a long road of healing and our constant prayers.

Also remember Mark and his family in prayer as they face the consequences of his actions that will affect every member.

The ripple effects of this misconduct will be felt throughout the Church both in Canada and internationally, but most especially within the Sacred Circle and Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples. We mourn with them."¹

¹ Source: <https://www.anglican.ca/news/public-announcement-of-the-resignation-of-archbishop-mark-macdonald/30039033/>

So why are we discussing this here, this morning? After all, that is the Anglican Church of Canada, not us, correct?

First, for those who are new to our St. Mary's community, and that is a lot of us, Mark Macdonald served as Bishop among us in the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska, from 1997 – 2007. In other words, he last served in Alaska over fifteen years ago, but it might seem to some of us here, like it was yesterday. MacDonald was a part of the faith journeys of a number of people here in this congregation.

Secondly, our present Bishop, Mark Lattime shares his same first name. Bishop Mark. So, I want to clarify and emphasize that while our present bishop, Mark Lattime, is away until May 9th on sabbatical, there is nothing unusual about that. But we are speaking of misconduct charges, we are speaking of our former Bishop, Bishop MacDonald.

So why bring this up at all?

Friends, the issue of sexual misconduct, especially of those we have trusted in leadership among us, is something we can never be silent about. And not to address this today, would be, in my personal opinion, and at least for me, an act of silence. This is not a church that will keep such silence.

The term "sexual misconduct" covers a wide range of situations and circumstances. In this situation, Canadian Archbishop Linda Nichols has said that the sexual misconduct has been "acknowledged" by Macdonald. Her statement further indicates that no issues of criminality are present. So I read that, as, whatever the circumstances, it does not involve minors, sexual assault, or sexual harassment, all of which are crimes.²

But that is no comfort. Whenever sexual misconduct occurs in leadership, there is a betrayal of trust and there are devastating consequences.

First, there are usually lifelong consequences for the complainant, the person or persons who is the survivor of such misconduct. The key to fully understanding this is in recognizing the imbalance of power that almost always exists when a person in leadership or authority engages in misconduct. It is always the responsibility of the person who holds disproportionate power to be first in maintaining and protecting boundaries that keep others safe: emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

² The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that nationwide, 81% of women and 43% of men experience some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime. Source: <https://www.nsvrc.org/statistics> . Again, let us be careful here not to speculate upon what we simply do not or cannot know about this particular situation, but those statistics frame the larger issue. I need to emphasize that the Anglican Church of Canada is reporting that there are no issues of criminality in the present situation.

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The betrayal of that trust often results in deep and lasting effects, including depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, physical symptoms, and damage to relationships, the capacity to trust and to be intimate with others, and the list goes on. Survivors often face years of reparative work to move successfully from being a victim to being a survivor to being one who thrives.

And because our relationship with those in leadership in the church are connected to our relationship to our faith, misconduct has severe consequences upon many survivors' relationship with their faith, their faith communities, and with God.

I believe that our prayers, first and foremost, must begin in solidarity with, and support of survivors of sexual misconduct.

Next, the Church of Canada asks us to pray for MacDonald's wife and children, and for the Indigenous communities MacDonald served. Again, the consequences ripple outward in waves of devastation.

I cannot even begin to imagine the pain that flows outward from such events.

And lastly, we are invited to hold MacDonald in our prayers, for the healing presence of God in his life and circumstance. None of us – no one – is ever defined by the worst that we have done, or have been accused of doing. There are no circumstances beyond the healing power of prayer, the healing work of God's Holy Spirit in this world. In this Easter season, we are witnesses to the power of the Resurrected Christ, God's own Self Risen for us, that our brokenness might be healed, and that our sin might be forgiven, and our relationships restored.

I caution us all, however, that the embrace of forgiveness, God's and ours, cannot take the place of full accountability, justice for the most vulnerable, and restorative acts born of an admission of responsibility. In our longing for reconciliation, and our own desires to move beyond uncomfortable things, let us *be very careful* not to try to move too quickly through the places of hard work and justice-making for all.

This is why we have a Safe Church program, to not only simply identify and prevent practices that could lead to misconduct, but also to create a church-wide culture in which we more fully understand the work of justice-making.

And now, the most difficult part this morning: I must hold up a mirror, that we might see ourselves and our own reflections more clearly:

I have spoken with 23 people of this news since it broke on Wednesday. I have listened to the responses of those I have spoken with throughout this diocese. I have heard much concern for MacDonald and for his family, and that is right and good. I have heard concern for the Indigenous communities of Canada, and our own. That is also as it should be. But only *three times*, in those conversations, have I heard concern be verbalized *first* for the well-being of the complainant, for the victim of misconduct, for the survivor of any betrayal of trust.

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Only three times out of 23. Rev. Dawn, God bless you. You were the first of those three. But that disparity has shaken me to the core. At times, over the last five days, I have felt anger, despair, sadness, and a numb nothingness. Sometimes, within the same hour and even the same conversation. It will likely be some time before I fully make sense of our collective response as the people of God.

I believe that our promise, church... our commitment, grounded in Scripture, Eucharist, and Holy Baptism, is to strive to be a place of genuine and authentic healing, where the truth, however painful, will be spoken out loud, and I believe that God's truth will set us all free. Free - where the suffocating cancer of silence gives way through cracks of brokenness to the light and the healing breath of the Spirit. Where difficult conversations can take place. Where true accountability can set the foundations upon which the work of authentic redemption can proceed. Where we can experience the mystery of Christ's resurrection in our lives.

For those who are survivors of sexual misconduct, *and for those who have been perpetrators of misconduct*, please hear this today: You are not alone. Healing is real. There is new life to be found beyond and through the pain. (There are resources listed at the bottom of the printed copy of this sermon, available in the narthex and later, at our website online)

The long walk to wholeness is perhaps the hardest work that you will ever do. But I believe that every single step of that hard work is worth it.

You may know and feel that your very sense of being, your heart and soul, have been pierced. But the story ends not on Good Friday, or our long endurance through the seeming timelessness of Holy Saturday, but with that early morning, walk to the tomb, while it is still dark and the light is yet to arrive.

Nature testifies to the ways of healing Grace. Every morning, throughout the world, birds sing in the hours of darkness just before dawn. While it is still dark, they sing in anticipation of the coming of the light.

You are not alone. Jesus, God's Own Self, crucified and risen, is here with you. With us.

May the Grace, healing power, and Love of Christ be with us all. Amen.

(The following resources and music pertain, not necessarily, to the situation referenced in today's message, but to the wider issue of sexual misconduct and healing)

Imbalances of power in relationships:

<https://www.thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Managing-power-imbbalances.pdf>

**Help is available
Speak with someone today
National Sexual Assault Hotline
Hours: Available 24 hours
1-800-656-4673**

Survivor Resources:

<https://www.rainn.org/national-resources-sexual-assault-survivors-and-their-loved-ones>

And <https://vawnet.org/>

Resources for when sexual assault happens to men:

<https://www.fredonia.edu/student-life/sexual-assault/malesurvivors>

Playlist:

Broken Things,

Words and music by Julie Miller:

Also:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqLw8wzHNSQ>

You can have my heart, though it isn't new,
It's been used and broken, and only comes in blue,
It's been down a long road, and it got dirty along the way,
If I give it to you, will you make it clean and wash the shame away?

You can have my heart, if you don't mind broken things,
You can have my life; you don't mind these tears,
Well, I heard that you make old things new, so I give these pieces all to you,

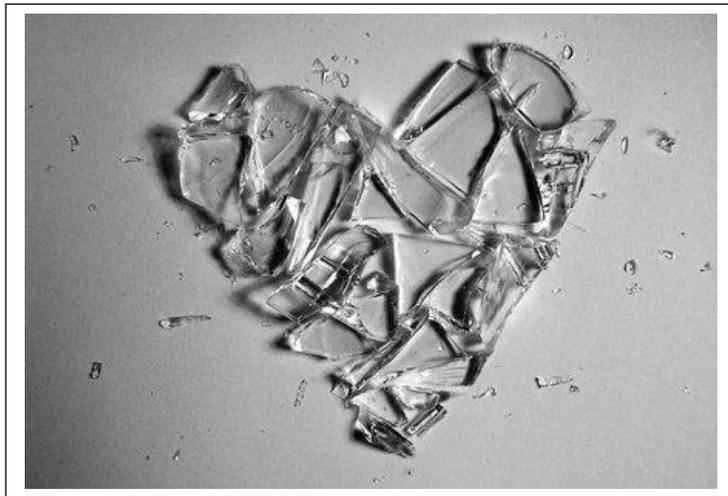
If you want it, you can have my heart.

So beyond repair, nothing I could do,
I tried to fix it myself, but it was only worse when I got through,
Then you walk right into my darkness and you speak words so sweet,
And you hold me like a child, 'til my frozen tears fall at your feet.

You can have my heart, if you don't mind broken things,
You can have my life if you don't mind these tears,
Well, I heard that you make old things new, so I give these pieces up to you,
If you want it, you can have my heart.

Writer: JULIE MILLER

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Till It Happens to You

Lady Gaga

You tell me it gets better, it gets better in time
 You say I'll pull myself together, pull it together
 You'll be fine
 Tell me what the hell do you know
 What do you know
 Tell me how the hell could you know
 How could you know

'Til it happens to you, you don't know
 How it feels
 How it feels
 'Til it happens to you, you won't know
 It won't be real
 No it won't be real
 Won't know how it feels

You tell me hold your head up
 Hold your head up and be strong
 'Cause when you fall, you gotta get up
 You gotta get up and move on

Tell me, how the hell could you talk
 How could you talk?
 'Cause until you walk where I walk
 It's just all talk

'Til it happens to you, you don't know
 How it feels
 How it feels
 'Til it happens to you, you won't know
 It won't be real (how could you know?)
 No it won't be real (how could you know?)
 Won't know how I feel

'Til your world burns and crashes
 'Til you're at the end, the end of your rope

'Til you're standing in my shoes, I don't wanna hear
 nothing from you
 From you, from you, 'cause you don't know

'Til it happens to you, you don't know
 How I feel
 How I feel
 How I feel
 'Til it happens to you, you won't know
 It won't be real (how could you know?)
 No it won't be real (how could you know?)
 Won't know how it feels

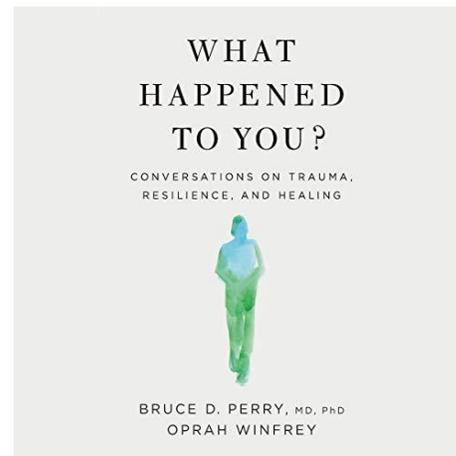
'Til it happens to you, happens to you
 Happens to you
 Happens to you, happens to you
 Happens to you (how could you know?)

'Til it happens to you, you won't know how I feel

Source: [LyricFind](#)

Songwriters: Diane Warren / Stefani Germanotta

Til It Happens to You lyrics © Sony/ATV Music
 Publishing LLC



No Power Over Me

Words and Music by Steve Siler

See:

<https://www.musicforthesoul.org/news/complicated-truths-songs-for-the-sexually-abused/>

For so long I felt like I was damaged
As if nothing I did was enough
Alone and drowning in my secret
I felt unworthy of love
I was fearful of humiliation
I was certain that everybody knew
But there was nothing wrong with me
and now at last I finally see it
So today here's what I choose to do

I release you
You have no power over me
I forgive you
I choose to set my own heart free
I am no longer the victim
of the bad choices that you made
Perhaps someday you'll get the help you need
You have no power over me

For too long I let hatred define me
I hated you for putting me in hell
I hated God for letting it happen
I even hated myself
But now I realize I bear no blame here
So I let myself out of this cell
What you did was not alright
but starting now I have decided
It won't spoil tomorrow as well

Cause
I release you
You have no power over me
I forgive you
I choose to set my own heart free
I am no longer the victim
of the wrong choices that you made

I hope someday you get the help you need
You have no power over me

The isolation is over
At last the truth has been told
The shadows no longer control me
and a new story is unfolding

Cause I release you
You have no power over me
I forgive you
I choose to set my own heart free
I am no longer the victim
of the wrong choices that you made
I pray someday you get the help you need
You have no power over me
Today I choose to set my own heart free
You have no power over me

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Doubting Thomas

Words and music by Nickel Creek

What will be left when I've drawn my last breath
 Besides the folks I've met and the folks who know me
 Will I discover a soul saving love or
 Just the dirt above and below me?

I'm a doubting Thomas
 I took a promise
 I do not feel safe
 O' me of little faith

Sometimes I pray for a slap in the face
 Then I beg to be spared cause I'm a coward
 If there's a master of death I bet he's holding his
 breath
 Cause I show the blind and tell the deaf
 About his power

I'm a doubting Thomas
 I can't keep my promises
 Cause I don't know what's safe
 O' me of little faith

Can I be used to help others find truth
 When I'm scared that I'll find proof that it's a lie
 Can I be led down a trail dropping bread crumbs
 To prove I'm not ready to die

Please give me time to decipher the signs
 Please forgive me for time that I've wasted

I'm a doubting Thomas
 I'll take your promise
 Though I know nothing's safe
 O' me of little faith
 O' me of little faith

Songwriters: Chris Thile

Doubting Thomas lyrics © BMG Rights
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The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The First Lesson - Acts 5:27-32

When the temple police had brought the apostles, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

The Psalm - Psalm 118:14-29

14 The Lord is my strength and my song, *
and he has become my salvation.

15 There is a sound of exultation and victory *
in the tents of the righteous:

16 "The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! *
the right hand of the Lord is exalted!
the right hand of the Lord has triumphed!"

17 I shall not die, but live, *
and declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has punished me sorely, *
but he did not hand me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; *
I will enter them;
I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 "This is the gate of the Lord; *
he who is righteous may enter."

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered
me *
and have become my salvation.

or

Psalm 150

1 Hallelujah!
Praise God in his holy temple; *
praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts; *
praise him for his excellent greatness.

22 The same stone which the builders rejected
*
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing, *
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 On this day the Lord has acted; *
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Hosannah, Lord, hosannah! *
Lord, send us now success.

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord; *
we bless you from the house of the Lord.

27 God is the Lord; he has shined upon us; *
form a procession with branches up to the horns
of the altar.

28 "You are my God, and I will thank you; *
you are my God, and I will exalt you."

29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; *
his mercy endures for ever.

3 Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn; *
praise him with lyre and harp.

4 Praise him with timbrel and dance; *
praise him with strings and pipe.

5 Praise him with resounding cymbals; *
praise him with loud-clanging cymbals.

6 Let everything that has breath *
praise the Lord. Hallelujah!

The New Testament - Revelation 1:4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The Gospel - John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.