
Risen! Artemis Lifts Our Hearts and Takes All of Us Into Space!

**A sermon by the Very Rev. Sam Candler
The Easter Vigil**

Like millions of people around the world, I was watching a television screen this past Wednesday evening, at about 6:00 pm.

I was watching the beautiful and massive complexity of a rocket launch. The spaceflight Artemis II successfully lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center down in Florida that evening. What a magnificent scientific achievement! We had camera shots of the tremendous rocket engines. We had camera shots of the various control centers. And we had camera shots of the four astronauts secure in the spacecraft Orion.

The preparation and development of the mission had begun years ago, and the flight was delayed a few months ago. This actual countdown actually began March 30. On Wednesday, we saw the countdown pause again a couple of times, as systems were checked and re-checked. And then we heard the launch controller, Charlie Blackwell-Thompson, patiently check in with every section of the team. "Go or No Go?" was the question, over and over again. "All systems Go!" we heard confirmed from station to station, everyone saying, "Go."

When the rocket rose, we heard cheers, and we saw cheers, from everywhere! From the control centers, from the bystanders, from ourselves, inside our own living rooms. All our hearts were lifted!

Apparently, NASA had set up a program where people could have their name put on a microchip/SD card that would go up into space with Artemis. At liftoff, over five million names ended up on that SD card, and they all had received virtual boarding passes! Right after liftoff, one of the NASA people, I have forgotten which one, said the same sort of thing they often say. But this time it made even more sense to me. The person said something like, "That's not just four people successfully going off in to space. That is the thousands, hundreds of thousands of people, who serve here at NASA, who put the parts and communications together. It is all of us."

I heartily affirm that comment. Artemis II rose, Artemis lifted our hearts, and it took all of us into space.

I feel the same way about Easter here at the Cathedral!

We gloriously celebrate Easter here because all of us have had a hand in the preparation and celebration. Jesus is risen, because all of us have taken part!

I have watched you! I have watched you tend to plans and fire, water and baptism, music and prayers, words and silence. I have watched you tend to each other. I have gratefully witnessed you loving each other, helping each other, bringing new life to each other. It is a glorious sight.

We celebrate Easter with beauty today because so many people have prepared the way. Your commitment is what lifts us up! Your love is what raises us to new life! Thank you for your love!

I got up early today. In my preparation, I realized that what I was getting up early for, was to thank you. Thank you for your love. When we love, and when we thank others for love, we receive new life. We receive resurrection! We lift up our hearts in the same way that Artemis II lifts our hearts into space!

And we can say the same thing not just about church, but about the world. The world itself is changed when we play a part in resurrection. When we participate in resurrection, we are lifting the hearts of the entire world. On this Easter Sunday, we are not here simply to make an objective statement, claiming that Jesus somehow rose from the dead two thousand years ago.

That is not what Easter is really about. Easter is not so much about Jesus rising from the dead two thousand years ago. Easter is about Jesus rising today! This morning, Jesus is risen! And Jesus is risen through our energy, our witness, our love.

The NASA community rejoiced at the liftoff of the Artemis II spacecraft because every one of them had a part in its mission. And they still do have a part in its mission. The Christian community rejoices today in the resurrection of Jesus because every one of us has a part in his mission. And we still do have a part in that mission.

The mission is to be risen! The mission is to lift our hearts! The mission is to lift each other's hearts! After our times of suffering and pain, Christ is risen! After our seasons of confusion and doubt, Christ is risen! Christ is risen not just here in Atlanta at the Cathedral of St. Philip, but alive throughout the world! Christ is risen not just today, but yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Christ is risen as the people of God give thanks and lift hearts, everywhere. Thank you! Christ is risen!

AMEN.

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