

Easter Day                      Luke 24:1-12  
Christ and Grace              April 21, 2019  
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In all of the accounts of the resurrection, no one expects the resurrection. Never mind that Jesus repeatedly predicted not only his death but also his resurrection. It's like it went in one ear and out the other, as we say when people are just not really listening to us! In the account we heard this morning from Luke (unless it went in one ear and out the other!) Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them all went to the tomb. It was early morning; so early that it was still dark. These women did *not* go to the tomb expecting a resurrection. They went to the tomb to do the same thing they always did when someone died. They went with the spices that they had prepared to anoint Jesus. Dead Jesus.

But here's the strange thing – the stone had been rolled away from the tomb - and yet this did not cause them alarm, even though it was a stone too large and heavy to be rolled away by one person. In their grief it is understandable that they did not take notice of the strangeness. And when they went into the tomb? They did NOT find the body. Would this not have given any of us a heart attack? Would we not have been in an immediate panic? But the women were only perplexed. Perplexed? Perplexed means baffled, confused, bewildered or uncertain. Somehow this reaction does not seem adequate when finding that the body of your loved one has gone missing! But that is what grief can do. That is what death can do. It dampens our emotions, it dulls reality, it darkens our perspective on life.

But then *suddenly*, two men in dazzling clothes stood beside the women! Now, you need to know that when your clothes are washed over and over in the Jordan River, they are *dull*, not dazzling. There were no laundry detergents to make clothes dazzling white in those days – no Tide detergent, no Clorox bleach, no oxi-clean. Back then dazzling white clothes were unquestionably worn by angels, by messengers from God. Finding themselves in the presence of holiness, the women finally reacted appropriately – they were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground! And then these men in dazzling clothes asked the all important question – and it is still the all important question for us today. “Why do you look for the living among the dead? The dazzling duo from God reminded the women of what they already knew, deep inside. They reminded them of what Jesus had told them. Because we all need reminding from time to time that Jesus is not dead but has risen.

And when we grasp this truth, we cannot help but share it. Only here is the hard part – sometimes when we share this amazing truth, others don't hear it, are not quite able to believe it. It goes in one ear and out the other. Like if you won the lottery and told your friends, but they didn't believe you. And that is exactly what happened when the women returned and told the eleven and all the rest about their remarkable encounter with the holy dazzling beings.

The reaction they got is one we have probably all experienced when we have tried to share a deep truth about ourselves or about a holy experience we have had. Sometimes the person we tell is not ready to hear it yet. Can't you just imagine this scene? The women return full of joy and tell this amazing story that Jesus has risen, and the men, who are locked up in fear, wondering if they are the next to die, simply cannot believe them. “Yeah, yeah, right, sure he is

risen. You women have been inhaling too many spices, you are tired, you are seeing things, hearing things. It's just an idle tale." The Greek word for idle is "leros" which in it's truest translation means delirious. The apostles thought these women were delirious!

And really, when we hear this story, if we are completely honest with ourselves, don't we sometimes think this whole death and resurrection thing is too hard to believe? Are we always ready for it, do *we* always expect a resurrection? In the busyness of life, in the expected daily routine, resurrection *can* seem like an idle tale. And so we keep on trudging to the tomb, over and over expecting to find nothing more than another dead body. We cannot imagine the possibility of new life in all our deadness.

Life is not always easy, faith is not always easy. It's often easier to keep going through the motions, showing up at the same old tomb with the same old spices like we always do, always expecting death, always expecting the same outcomes. We, like the women, can keep looking in the wrong places; like the disciples, we can keep locking ourselves into a room full of skeptics.

Or... we can do something different. We can remember. We can remember what Jesus told us. Like the women and the disciples we sometimes need help remembering. And that is what happened after the resurrection. People remembered and reminded others to remember. They shared their stories and their experiences of the risen Christ, insisting that this was no idle tale. Oh it took some of them longer to realize the truth than it did others – just as we all come to the truth at different speeds and in different circumstances today. But it is in the sharing and the remembering that we find new life. And it is in this community of faith where we share our stories and hear the resurrection stories of others that we come to believe, little by little, day by day in the new life God promises us.

Life is full of dead places, full of the tombs of disappointment, failures, broken relationships, and losses. What are those things in our lives that have power over us, that crucify us day after day, that lock us into our tombs, that convince us it's safer to stay in our tombs than to risk the light of day? The Good News on this Easter morning is that Christ is risen! The Good News is that the risen Christ can appear in all of the dead places in our lives! The Good News is that the love of God can pull us out of our grief over things lost, can pull us out of our locked rooms of skepticism!

What is it that needs resurrection in our lives? What new life do we dream of, imagine, long for, but are too afraid to believe it could be possible? We can all think of something, I am sure. Can we begin to believe in the possibility of resurrection? Or will we continue to look for the living among the dead? For we will not find Christ there. Christ is out and about in the world, creating new things and restoring what is dead back to life. Because peace is more powerful than violence, love is more powerful than hate, and life is more powerful than death.

Even though we hear the story every Easter, resurrection may not be what we expect. But this is no idle tale.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
(The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.)

