

King of Glory Lutheran Church – Easter – April 15-16, 2017

Matthew 28: 1-10 “Now That’s Resurrection!”

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Resurrection is relationship with God – which we experience, we don’t have to understand. Easter resurrection is now as we see through the eyes of faith.

Oh Church! We must proclaim those ancient words still true today!

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Indeed He has, but Mary and Mary Magdalene didn’t know resurrection when they went early that morning to sit and keep vigil at Jesus’ tomb. Just like we might go to reflect and be close to our loved ones’ bodies. They had no way of understanding the earth shaking under their feet was all of creation breaking open with exultation that Jesus had been raised. For them, it must have been terrifying. After trying to keep their balance they see this unbelievably brilliant angel descending from the sky who then rolls the massive stone away from the entrance as if it were a child’s play thing. Why would they understand these things? They’d never experienced resurrection.

Have you?

Then this intensely radiant angel says, “Do not be afraid.” Messengers of God always say that to humans. Really? It seems rather ridiculous. We homo sapiens tend to tremble just a bit when faced with the divine.

“I know you are looking for Jesus. He has been raised and is not here! Go to Galilee, there you will see him!”

Mary and Mary Magdalene had never experienced resurrection. They were all at once fearful and filled with joy that the possibility of Jesus being alive might be true! But how did they know? How could they grasp it?

When God wants us to understand God’s living presence, God will make certain we do. It might feel a little bit like a tap on the shoulder. Then a tug. Or maybe a strong pull. With some of us, God stops us in our tracks.

Jesus stood in the middle of the road. “Greetings! Be joyful!” Jesus said. The women grabbed Jesus’ feet while praying with elation! There it was! Resurrection! He was truly alive! Their Lord! God had come bringing new life to them.

As Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis says, “When you experience resurrection, you start to feel resurrected.” (<https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4847>)

Once working as a hospital chaplain, I got called to the Emergency Room to talk to a man who had just experienced a massive heart attack. I pulled back the curtain and greeted him.

“How are you doing?”

“Well I wasn’t scared until they told me they were calling a chaplain!”

Bless his heart. He didn’t have a strong sense of resurrection yet. God was still tapping.

But another patient on another day did. He worked at a grocery store and had accidentally gotten locked inside the walk in freezer way in the back corner of the store. Upon realizing his situation, of course he yelled and banged on the door with all his might. But he knew that no one could hear him and no one would suspect anything wrong if he was absent for a while. As the minutes went by he got colder and colder, realizing his situation was dire. He began to pray. “God, I’m not certain that anyone will find me. But I don’t want to die alone. Will you come and sit with me?” He prayed for his precious daughter. He prayed for his family. Then he told me this. “An amazing peace came over me. I began to sing the old hymns I learned in church; Amazing Grace, Jesus Loves Me. As I fought to stay conscious, I just focused on the picture of Jesus’ face. He was in that freezer with me. I don’t remember the door opening, or them finding me. The next thing I remember was waking up here in the hospital.” With tears streaming down his face, he said, “God saved me. I’m so thankful to be alive!”

That’s it! That’s resurrection. Easter resurrection happens in relationship with God. God who loved the world so much, that nothing else would do except to send God’s precious Son to save us. God chose relationship. Jesus died. Jesus rose that Easter reducing to nothing our sin and death. Those old sins we can’t forget and keep dragging around? Gone! That fear of living and fear of dying? Gone! Resurrection happens for

us. It happens around us. God accomplishes resurrection. We don't! We receive it as gift and grace.

“When you experience resurrection, you begin to feel resurrected.”

We come to worship. We proclaim what we believe in the words of the creeds of the Church: “I believe in God. I believe in Jesus Christ who on the third day, rose again. I believe in the Holy Spirit.” It's one thing to say it. It's another thing to believe it. People have tried to explain Easter. There are books and theories. But resurrection isn't something we just confess or read about in the pages of books. Resurrection gets lived. Lazarus walked out of his tomb in his grave cloths. Peter walked on water. Saul was blinded and then saw. Jesus met the women on the road. When we experience resurrection...well it's like a stone getting rolled away from our eyes. We don't have to understand the cross. We only need to stand under the cross. God promises new life – life that will come in spite of what life brings.

In Tanta, Egypt where the bombing took place on Palm Sunday last weekend, people stood in line this weekend waiting to enter the church yard for prayers. One female worshipper said, “We are not afraid. Terrorism is everywhere. If we were afraid, we'd never leave our homes. We have our children here. God is with us.” Another Muslim man, crying because his Christian friend was killed, said, “Terrorism will never succeed.” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39561908>

That is Easter resurrection! Where there is relationship with God, there is Resurrection. For even in the midst of sin, death and destruction Easter happens. God creates faith and boldly brings women and men to walk back to a place of death which in doing so brings new life. Step by step by step.

We don't have to understand it, we live it. Once you experience Resurrection, you start to feel resurrected.

You see, Easter didn't just happen once. Resurrection takes place each day as we look with eyes of faith. Jesus promised the women, “There you will see me.” They did and we do as well.

Easter comes as we stand at God's table eating and drinking holy grace. Resurrection arrives when the doctor comes out and says, "Surgery went great." Easter comes when you've had a fight with your spouse or best friend and you say the words, "I'm sorry." Resurrection happens in relationship.

But it also comes all around us. Martin Luther said, 'Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.' He also said, 'If there is no laughter in heaven, I don't want to go there.'

Yesterday, April the giraffe finally had her 4th calf. Watching that little one come into the world is like Easter all over again.

Take a look around. Take a look into our hearts and lives. Where have we known resurrection? Where have you seen Easter? Where do you long for it to come?

I think it would be great if we could share with one another where we've seen Easter Resurrection. In a relationship? In nature? In the news? We've got to keep telling resurrection stories because we live in a world that continues to talk of sin and death. Hypocrisy. Racism. Who stands higher on what corporate ladder.

Who can share with me a Resurrection moment?

(Listen and affirm) That's resurrection!

The angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid." If you've never experienced resurrection, don't worry. God will come to you and you will see Him. If you have experienced resurrection, or are looking for resurrection today, write your resurrection moment or prayer on the Resurrection Tree. Jesus' death on the cross was changed into a glorious new life. So we've decorated His cross with glorious colored paper where you can write your resurrection moment or prayer for new life. Feel free to do it during communion or the offering or after worship before you leave.

The earth may shake under our feet. An angel visitation may happen. But Jesus promised to come that we might see, because....Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Now that's resurrection. Amen.