

EASTER MESSAGE

“What Difference Does This Day Make?” This is the question that Kate’s Easter message ultimately asked this past Sunday 4-21-19. We invite you to find yourself in the story told in Luke 23:50-56, 24:1-12.

On this important day, let’s ask an important question. Who are you as you come to witness the empty tomb this Easter morning? Where do you find yourself in the scene? What is your part in this unfolding story? Perhaps you are Joseph of Arimathea, moved to compassion by suffering, seeing what needs to be done after the horror of Friday, and doing it. You don’t expect anything miraculous to happen, you’ve seen this all before, yet you yourself, in your abiding care, are a wonder.

Perhaps you are one of the women who prepared spices for Jesus’ body on Friday evening, returning to the tomb at dawn on Sunday. Your heart has been broken by the trials of your beloved teacher and all who loved him, but **you are not broken**. You have one another. You find strength in your friends. It is with these very friends that you dare to approach the tomb, even as you see that the stone, very strange, has been rolled away. And together you become willing to confront a **whole new possibility**, that the one you thought was dead is alive, though you don’t know how. Being essentially one who reaches out to others, you run to tell your brothers, more friends, the community that has sustained you these days and months as you walked with Jesus.

Perhaps you are one of the beings in dazzling clothes...not quite of this world. You know folks like this, don’t you? People who radiate a joy that sings through their whole bodies. Being with them makes you believe, if only for that time, that there are mysteries in this world yet to discover, to explore, to be swept up in. Honestly, that’s who I **want to be** in this story, but have a **long** way to go. At least I have the clothes down today!

I would expect that many of us fall into the category of the skeptical men, though most of them, men and women, are probably not here this morning. They hear some intriguing news, but they have been disappointed before. They are not about to go off on some wild goose chase because some women have seen a ghost or something! These are the same people who will write me off (including Joel!) when I tell you that as I sat down to write this message in the dark, I heard the first peeper of spring coming from the little stream the melting snow makes in the front of our house, a warm breeze blew in the window, and looking beyond my burning candles, I saw a figure in white walk up part of the rise across the street and into the woods. Was this amazing? A mystery? Or not enough sleep? One note: The words “idle tale” in the text would more closely be translated into English as a “rant of delirium.” So, your choice – is the women’s story an idle tale? a rant of delirium? or **something else**?

Then, of course, there is Peter. You hear the women’s story, you shake your head with the rest of the guys, but then no matter how crazy it sounds, you want to believe. You want to know that such a thing is possible. That the one you loved and staked your life on is not truly gone to you. So you run to the tomb to see for yourself, and end up astonished, perhaps not convinced, but **amazed**. You are now a seeker, and probably will be for the rest of your life.

What difference does it make who we are in the story? It matters a great deal. This is our archetypal resurrection story, and it is part of the subconscious of all Christians. We live our lives somehow in relation to it. Even today, some have come to church like Joseph of Arimathea,

having taken care of all the strenuous details of what needs to be done. Their minds may still be on what they need to accomplish before the sun goes down, what time to put the ham in, getting the car gassed up, visiting an infirm elder. They are kind and responsible, and their faith is about doing, and yes, they **are** a wonder.

Some, like the women at dawn, have come to church with their hearts on their sleeve to celebrate with their friends. It is within your circle of intimates, your beloved community, that you face tragedy or experience the acute joy that comes with knowing you belong and have purpose here. The beings in white, they've come too, I think, in the guise of our **babies and children**. The good news emits from them in squeals of laughter and chocolate covered hugs. Through them we know absolutely that life continues...the peepers will sing, the warm breezes will blow, and our Thursday Gethsemanes will become our Sunday spring gardens!

Those who have been told of the empty tomb, yet can't quite respond to the message, let's not be hard on them. They have had their share of disappointment and death. Sometimes it takes a little longer for grief to turn into praise, for tears of sorrow to burst into streams of joy. Though they may not have shown up at this resurrection site today, who knows what they will encounter along the road? Think of Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus. They too are a part of us, and our celebration must embrace them. **Who knows?** They may morph into **Peter** and start to think, "Maybe there is something to this...perhaps I need to

check it out. I need not stay in this sealed box of cynicism forever." They will go back to look for signs of life, and slowly, but surely, become amazed.

But I have left out the most important piece of the archetypal story, the one right at the center of it. It is the **absence in the tomb**, the absence that has become **the presence today** and every day in our lives. The **risen Christ**. He doesn't show up bodily in our story today, yet **we** together here are that body. The body of the risen Christ. For here are the ones who give their lives to love. Who courageously and against all conventional sense widen the table of welcome for all, subvert the cruel ways of our times as Jesus did, who go through hell for it, suffer, die, and are buried. And then come roaring back as the Spirit of mercy and fierce love in the world.

I have no doubt that Christ is alive among us here today. Within us. Around us. There is divine life abundant that has been offered to love, given for service, made holy by sacrifice. There is life that has been melted and shaped in the crucible of difficult times...has been knocked down, and even out, but has risen up and out of the tomb by the power of the great love that has borne us all.

What difference does this day make? It holds us all in the story, the true and powerful story, of the **way of God's love**. So here we are, every single one us, both risen and perhaps still waiting for resurrection to happen for us. But it will...for - Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. It is **our story** now to live! Amen.