

Matthew 28:1-10

¹After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

On the Road Again April 16, 2017

I was watching the news Friday morning and they had a segment with Late Night host Jimmy Kimmel, who asked kids to explain the meaning of Easter this week. Some of them came pretty close, and some, well, not so much. Here is a sample of some of their answers.

Reporter: can you tell me the story of Easter?

Kids: uh...we got toys?

Reporter: what kind of toys

Kids: Legos!

Kids: Jesus rose from the dead?

Reporter: what happened to Jesus on Easter?

Kid: He made a bunny?

Kid: He led some people somewhere?

Reporter: who were like, his main friends?

Kid: um...his disciples?

Kid: The bad guys killed him

Kid: The Romans I think it was?

Kid: He got like pinned to a cross

Kid: He did this...(pose on the cross)

Kid: Everybody was watching, and um...and then sooner or later he died

Reporter: what did he die of?

Kid: I don't know....

Reporter: What do you think?

Kid: um, drugs

Kid: He got put into a cave with a rock

Kid: He was in heaven working on his project and then he came down to see the bunny

Reporter: What project was he working on?

Kid: a computer?

Kid: he made a promise that he would come back on Easter?

Kid: It took three days. And two angles to remove a boulder, and Jesus was alive!

Kid: When he came back he gave people easter eggs

Reporter: What did people say when Jesus came back

Kid: He said, bunny please don't hide the Easter eggs

Kid: um...Jesus please take care of us, please don't kill us

Reporter: What did Jesus do when he came back to life?

Kid: Kid does the happy dance!

<http://ew.com/tv/2017/04/14/jimmy-kimmel-kids-easter-story/>

Jesus did the happy dance! I think we should too!

Lent and Easter are a lot like Advent and Christmas, aren't they? In both of these seasons we spend time getting ready for some future event that requires a great deal of time and devotion. We are either living in expectation of the Christ child or living in sadness over his crucifixion and then rejoicing over his resurrection. And many of us spend a great deal of time planning and preparing for these seasons in our lives and not just at church. There are family celebrations that go along with these seasons as well and for most of us we breathe a sigh of relief when it is all over, don't we? I don't know about you but as I walked through the season of Lent, I am eyeing Easter as a point of conclusion. A perfectly good stopping point. A point in time where it will all be over, and we can get back to our ordinary lives. We crossed the finish line and now it's over. Yeah! But...

The resurrection isn't a stopping place. It isn't the end of a long story but rather, it is the beginning of a new story. And Jesus is already out writing the first chapter and he is telling us to get moving and get on over to Galilee and we will see him there, as well as on the way. What does that mean? Well, I think Galilee was home for Jesus and the disciples, wasn't it? and I tend to think that he is telling them, to get out of that dusty closed up room they are hiding in and get home. Get back where life is happening. Go and find him in all the usual places, as well as, those unexpected places, where you will see him at work in the world. You don't have to wonder where he is, he is right here in your own neighborhood. And no matter where you go, he will be with you so you don't have to be afraid. But he is not hanging around in his old tomb and you shouldn't be hanging around in yours either! Let's get back on the road again.

And it begs the question, "Where is your Galilee?" and where are you called to continue the story? How do we follow him into the world? How do we experience the resurrection in our daily lives? How do we continue to follow Jesus, from the empty tomb back into the world? And I confess that when asked to follow Jesus into the world and continue the story of his love and mercy and grace, I too, like the two Marys, am filled with fear and great Joy.

Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church often admonishes his flock: “To Go to Galilee.” And He reminds them that Galilee is a way of talking about the world. That Galilee is in the streets of the city. That Galilee is in our rural communities, in our hospitals, in our office spaces. Galilee is where God’s children live and dwell. In Galilee, you will meet the living Christ, for He has already gone ahead of you. He goes on to say, “A few years ago I was in a coffee shop in Raleigh, North Carolina, just a few blocks away from our Diocesan House there. While in line I started a conversation with a gentleman who turned out to be a Mennonite pastor. He had been sent to Raleigh to organize a church in the community on the streets without walls. As we were talking over our coffee, he said something to me that I have not forgotten. He said the Mennonite community asked him to do this because they believed that in this environment in which we live, the church can no longer wait for its congregation to come to it, the church must go where the congregation is.

Now is our time to go. To go into the world to share the good news of God and Jesus Christ. To go into the world and help to be agents and instruments of God’s reconciliation. To go into the world, let the world know that there is a God who loves us, a God who will not let us go, and that that love can set us all free.”

Jesus goes on ahead, just as God has always done for his people. And he tells them to go back to Galilee, back where it all started because now it’s your turn. You know things now that you didn’t before and he will be with you. Not in some distant future, though that is true, but he will be with you now. Each and every day if you will just look for him. And how do we experience the risen Jesus? Perhaps like those 2 weary travelers who met him on the road and saw him in the breaking of bread? Something we will do today as well. Maybe as they gathered together to pray as we often do. Maybe as they delivered meals to the lonely and needy, or visited with folks in prison or those confined to their homes, or maybe when you give or receive a gift from someone at the drive thru, maybe when you stand in protest alongside those who are excluded, or maybe when you hear a song that strikes deep chords in your heart, or when you sit and listen to the birds singing, maybe in the stillness of a garden or a mountain top. Maybe when you act on a vision of faith that keeps calling you to move forward. Maybe in the least expected places; the least expected Galilees.

I had a funny, but sweet experience Thursday evening. Anna and I had gone out to dinner at one of our local eateries. We were enjoying some much needed time together, and I guess we were having our Maundy Thursday meal with Jesus at the Mexican Restaurant. While we were eating I suddenly noticed a small child and her father standing next to my chair. She was about 3 or 4 years old and cute as a button. We had seen her come in earlier with her family. Her name was Lucy and her dad said she was visiting all the tables and for some reason, she thought she knew me. We had a very nice chat and she placed her hand on mine and I put my hand over hers and said how much I enjoyed meeting her. I blessed her and then off she went to visit another table. I hope her dad reminds her of this in about 10 years when she’s a teenager and might not be so courageous. But it just reminded me that we don’t need to be afraid to share love with others. And her dad, like Jesus, walks with us and encourages us to be loving and open. To not be afraid to work the room, or the places where you find yourselves, sharing the amazing love of God with everyone. I think I can say that I saw Jesus on my way to Galilee that evening and I hope to see him again soon. And when I do, I’m going to do as that little kid in the interview did when they asked him, “What did Jesus do when he came back to life?” I’ll do the happy dance, and you should too! He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Let us pray

Jesus, You told us this would happen; that we would know that death was not an ending, but rather a beginning. You promised that no tomb would hold you and that we would see you again alive and glorified.

On this Easter morn we welcome you Jesus into our lives. We welcome your resurrection for it is life changing, life giving and life sustaining. We welcome the hope it brings to our world. We welcome the joy it brings to our darkness. We welcome the empty tomb for we know that it means you are on the loose.

And so, with all our faith, tentative and weak though it is we pray for everyone who needs the touch of your resurrection: We pray for all who have forgotten how to see beyond this temporary life into eternity. We pray for all whose lives are so consumed by death and terror, that life seems unreal and out of reach.

We pray for those who mistakenly believe that they can find life by destroying the lives of others. We pray for those who feel that their right to life has been stolen away. We pray for those who grieve over the life of a loved one, now ended in this space and time. And we pray for every human soul, ourselves included, that Your Spirit of Life would break into our experience and change it into something of eternal value.

O, Living Lord, on this day of Resurrection, we offer now the prayers of our hearts for those we love both near and far, both known and unknown, and ask that you hear our prayers both spoken and silent.

God of Grace, you cause the sun to rise and chase away the shadows of death. Each day you promise resurrection, that we may be born again to new life and overcome all that would hurt or destroy. Fill us with the Holy Spirit, that we may be alive again with the power and peace of Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Accept our prayers, as we bring them to you in faith and with thanksgiving. For we offer them in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray saying...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.