

Easter Sunday Year C 2010
Luke 24:1-12
Sermon for Advent LC
April 4th, 2010

“Easter: Why Does it Matter?”

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Alleluia He is Risen! (He is risen indeed, alleluia!). So what? I mean what does it really matter– that Jesus the Christ who died upon the cross did not stay dead but rose. So what? I mean that just sounds plain crazy– even the disciples in the Gospel laughed at the thought when the women told them– they said it sounded like an idle tale– or bologna better yet– b.s. They doubted. But let’s say it is true for we know it is but why does it even matter? I was faced with that question this week as I was on my mission of good coffee– I had made my way into Higher Grounds to get some coffee...I was wearing my collar so it was obvious I was either a pastor or someone with interesting fashion habits when a twenty-something woman came up to me and said, “you believe in Jesus I suppose since you are a pastor or something?” I said, “I sure do, why do you ask?” She said, “well I don’t really know if I do, I mean this whole idea that he died but then came alive doesn’t make a lot of sense, and even if it is true why does it matter to me and my life?” I responded, “I hope you know it is true and it completely matters because it changes everything.” She was in a hurry and I could tell she did not want to talk much longer so I offered her a card and invited her to call anytime. Who knows if she will, but I think God used that moment to at least invite her to think a bit. Dear friends, Alleluia He is Risen....but really why does it matter?

That first day of the week that we encounter in our Gospel this morning really is full of surprises isn’t it. I think if we examine the reading carefully and truly allow ourselves to go to that place we can answer the question at least generically of why Easter matters at all. To refresh your memory a little bit, Jesus just went from hailed king on Palm Sunday to convicted criminal and crucified savior in a matter of less than a week. He died a terrible death, and the disciples and those close to him were in mourning and grieving his loss and probably were very afraid that their life as they knew it was over. The one that they had trusted, who had filled them with hope that everything would be different because of him was gone. And it seemed that death was victorious that darkness was more powerful than light, that hope did not stand a chance in the face of the reality of mortality and that Jesus was gone forever. They saw him put in the tomb and the rock rolled in front of it and they waited. Waited for something...or perhaps waited for nothing but a chance to make sense of it all. Jesus died...it was a dark night and a gloomy reality–he was gone.

BUT!!! That’s not the end is it. Today we celebrate a different reality. Look at the first word of the Gospel reading from Luke today. But....and that’s a rather large word for us to consider today...it changes everything about the existence of the disciple’s hopelessness and the women’s fear. That “but” changes the entire reality of the world. That But is why Easter matters. Anytime in scripture where you see the word “but” you need to pay attention because it means a point is going to be made and no point is bigger than what follows in Luke’s Gospel today. **“But...on the first day of the week,**

at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices they prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body.” Probably at this point more fear entered their minds...then they see two men who proclaim the truth for us today... **“why do you look for the living among the dead...he is not here, but has risen!”** And with that word everything has changed. Death does not have victory, the end is not dark and black, the reality is that light overcomes darkness that hope is bigger than despair that life in Christ is new life and the best life...that my friends is why Easter matters at all. Because Jesus did not stay dead, but rose from the dead so that you may not perish but have eternal life with your Lord and your Savior! Jesus is risen, he is risen indeed- that' s the promise, that's what matters...Jesus died...But...he is risen.

But I wonder, does that promise and word of hope mean anything to you... does it matter to the person I ran into on the coffee shop grounds? Does it matter to the one who feels hopeless this morning, who is grieving and sad, who is unemployed and in despair, who is sick and facing death? Does it matter to the people who feel the church does not accept them for one reason or another, does it matter to the one who ran away from their God and truly don't know what to do with their faith? Does it matter at all? The short answer is yes, it means something...but why? Well here's why...life happens, darkness sets in, bad things take place and we face uncertain realities. Nothing is guaranteed in our life- we will face obstacles, and because of our sinful nature and our broken reality we will be forced to deal with hurt and pain. Yet, the Easter message changes that pain, does not take it away entirely but rather alters the ending and gives hope where we need it most. Life happens, death is a reality, hardships will hurt, addiction may get you, broken relationships are a certainty, hate may even fill your body, abuse may be something you are used to, fear may be all you can think of, sadness may cloud your entire existence....BUT...the tomb was empty... and he is risen. In the rising of your Savior Jesus Christ all of those things can be taken a little easier...Jesus by his death has destroyed the power of death and by his resurrection gives you your own resurrection. Dear friends, life is not easier just because of Jesus- but because of Jesus you have the tools, the promise, the hope, the community to get through whatever you face. So I pray, that you know Jesus loves you, and will love you forever and has claimed you as his child and now because the tomb was empty you have the hope of a new life in Jesus Christ that is better than anything else that wins...grace wins, life wins, you win because of Christ.

God loves you and so do I. Amen