

“Finding God in an Unexpected Resurrection”

Luke 24: 1-12

Here we are on Easter morning, celebrating the resurrection story of our Lord and Savior, our Savior who leaves the tomb, our Savior who steps out of the darkness, our Savior who overcomes death, and most importantly our Savior who brings us new life. Here we are on Easter morning, waiting to hear that familiar story once again, waiting to hear that story of the resurrection once again. Here we are on Easter morning, just waiting to hear the good news that life has the final word over death once more.

But let's be honest-wasn't there just a small part inside all of us that was worried that maybe just maybe this year, the story might be different, that maybe just maybe, when we walked in here this morning, the story might have changed and we would not be hearing the good news again this year. Wasn't there just a small part inside all of us that was worried the outcome of the story wouldn't be the same as last year, or the year before that or the same as it has been for thousands of years? Let's be honest. We know good things don't last forever. So, maybe that's why upon coming here this Easter morning, we are a little hesitant to celebrate. We are figuring that surely at some point, the good news of the resurrection is going to come to an end. Right?

Well, let me relieve you of your worries and wondering. The story hasn't changed. Today we are still celebrating the good news of the resurrection. Today we are still celebrating that death does not have the last word. Today we are still celebrating that God wins! Thanks be to God!

Now that that has all been said, the thing we have to realize is that as we gather here on this Easter morning we are not alone in our worrying or wondering about the whole resurrection /good news sort of thing. We come by our worrying and wondering honestly because let's face it, that's what we have learned to do through our dealings with this world. We've learned good things don't last forever. We've learned good things always come to an end. We have come to expect from our world that the other shoe will always drop and that people just don't come up from the grave in triumph. We've experienced enough death and darkness in our own lives to know this to be true. We've experienced enough brokenness in our world to know that sometimes, more often than not, it does feel like the darkness will overcome the light. So let's be honest, even though we are sitting here waiting for that familiar story, a story that calls us to hope, a story that reminds us God is in control, a story that tells us about the gift of new life, we admit that because of our dealings with this world, we know that the good guy doesn't always win. We know that not everything ends with happily ever after. We expect bad news in our lives and in our world. So even as we gather here on this Easter morning to

celebrate the resurrection, who can really blame us for worrying that maybe just maybe this year...the resurrection won't happen, that maybe just maybe this year...death really will have the final word, that this year maybe just maybe instead of hearing the good news of the resurrection that we all expect to hear the preacher share, we are just a little afraid that all we will be told today is that bad things really do happen to good people and that there is nothing that will ever change that fact. We admit that on this Easter morning we are a little worried. Because if the world is right, and if bad news wins every time, where do we go from here as the Body of Christ here in this world? As people of faith, we know, that without the good news of the resurrection, we are left without hope. As people of faith, We know, that without the good news of the resurrection, we may just leave here a bit more guarded in our interactions with other people. That Without the good news of the resurrection, we as people of God may just become a bit more cautious, a bit more cynical about the world we live in and the people we see every day. That Without the good news of the resurrection, we as people of faith would be lost and life would have no meaning.

So before we go any farther, let's be honest, wasn't there just a small part inside all of us that worried and wondered if this year would be the year that we would not hear the good news of the resurrection. Because if that's the case, maybe that's why we cautiously entered into the church doors. Because if that's the case,

maybe that's why we worry so much about stuff in our lives. Because if that's the case, maybe that's why we wonder if we can really believe in the good news.

Maybe we don't want to get our hopes up. We don't want to be disappointed again, disappointed just like all those other times when we trusted and believed, when we just knew for sure things would last. Maybe we are a little cautious, a little guarded because we don't want to get our hopes up just in case it doesn't happen, just in case, God really isn't in control.

Once again, let me put your minds at ease-just in case you were wondering, just in case you were worried, just in case you need to know how it is all going to end before you are going to be able to listen to any more of the sermon-God wins! God wins each and every time. God wins each and every year. God wins! Death does not have the final word. God does. So everyone put your minds at ease-God wins. So let's all take a big sigh of relief! Whoo...

And now that all of our minds are at ease, I'll share that I realized that the funny thing about all our worrying and wondering, all our worrying and wondering if the resurrection happened, all our worrying and wondering if we can trust it to happen again this year, all our worrying and wondering if the news about resurrection is just too good to be true, that I realized Luke is right there with us, worrying and wondering. He is wondering if he can trust the good news as well. He is expecting the bad news. He is expecting death. He is expecting darkness. He

is telling the story about the death of his Lord and Savior. And he is worried, and wondering just like us, if this time, death really does have the last word. That's why he tells the story the way he does. That's why he starts the story of that first Easter morning, the way he does in darkness. that's why he has the ladies going to the tomb, ready to prepare for death, ready for the sadness, ready for the darkness...except that those things never come true, except there is an ending which surprises everyone. Luke tells us that the women are met by two witnesses and experience the unexpected resurrection of their Lord and Savior.

I invite you to turn in your pew Bibles to

(Read text).

I will tell you that all through this past week, as I thought about this sermon title, I couldn't help but hear in my head the famous line from Monty Python about the Spanish Inquisition but this time the words were changed and it went a little something like this: "No One Expects the Resurrection!" No one expects the Resurrection. Even today, as I read the text, even as we gathered, we expected bad news. We expected death. We expected darkness. But we never expected the resurrection!

All week, I have wondered why that is and it has bothered me all week. Why can't we just trust that God is in control? Why can't we just trust that death does

not have the last word? Why can't we trust that the resurrection is going to happen again this year?

Isn't it funny how after reading the story each and every year, how after hearing about the multiple occasions when Jesus tells his disciples that death doesn't have the last word, and how he tells them that on the third day he would be raised from the grave, isn't it funny how each and every Easter, we make our way to the tomb, looking for the dead? Each and every Easter, we see the empty tomb, and like the disciples, we are slow to believe. Each and every Easter, We see the empty tomb and we shake our heads, puzzling over the situation.

as I sat with this faith dilemma all week, I realized something very freeing that I am going to share with you today. I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Are you ready for it? Here it is: No matter how many times we look at the empty tomb, we are never going to understand it. That's it! We are never going to know how the resurrection happened. We are never going to know what Jesus' first words were when he rolled back the stone. We are never going to know the how, the, where, the when. We are never going to understand the resurrection. And that is so freeing for us as people of faith. We don't need to know the details. All we need to know is the why! Because God so loved the world. All we need to know is that it happened! So that we might live.

And here is another part of the secret-The empty tomb doesn't produce faith. The empty tomb doesn't make us believe. The empty tomb isn't what matters!

Here is what matters: Faith is produced when we experience the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread with one another. Our faith becomes stronger when we experience the risen Christ by loving one another as God loves us. Faith begins to reside in our hearts when we experience the risen Christ in our midst. our belief grows each and every time we allow these things to happen! That's what matters for us as people of faith. Faith and Belief! These things happen because of the Risen Christ!

What we need to understand is that Easter isn't about the empty tomb. Let me say that again-Easter isn't about the empty tomb. Easter isn't about figuring out what we believe did or did not happen when Jesus came out of that tomb. Easter isn't about the empty tomb.

Easter is about the Risen Lord. Easter is about the fact that God so loves this world that God would not let death have the last word. Easter is about God being in control of this world. Easter is about the tremendous grace and overwhelming love of God that is available for each and every one of us. Easter is about the invitation to experience the presence of the Risen Lord that is in our midst each and every day of our lives if we only have the courage to look beyond our puzzlement over the empty tomb and see the Risen Lord, waiting there to greet us.

You see, the details of the resurrection don't matter. What matters is that the grace of God, the love of God, the peace of God is not limited to just one particular event in time. They are not limited to one particular place. God's grace, God's love, God's peace, God's joy, happen all the time, and more often than not, they happen when we are least expecting them. They happen through unexpected people. They happen in unexpected places. They happen through unexpected conversations, through unexpected blessings, through unexpected messages of hope.

God's grace, God's love, God's peace happen all the time even when all we expect to happen is the worst possible situation. They happen all the time because of unexpected resurrections because we open ourselves up to the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst! Because we are claimed and named as God's very own! Easter is not about the empty tomb! Easter is about the Risen Lord and the unexpected resurrections that happen in our lives each and every day!

That's why All the Gospel accounts of that first Easter morning tell us of the first unexpected resurrection. Each and every one of them tell us that disciples didn't expect the resurrection to happen that day. And why would they? They knew Jesus died. They knew Jesus was buried. They were afraid and didn't know what to do next. They had lost hope and had given up any inkling that Jesus was the Son of God.

And it wasn't just the disciples that had given up hope or didn't expect the resurrection to happen that day. Even the women who come to the tomb didn't expect a resurrection. They start out for the cemetery preparing for death, bracing for the task ahead of them. They brought the spices to prepare the body and to say good bye to their lord and master forever. They expected to see the tomb untouched. And boy were they surprised!

All because not one single follower of Jesus expected the resurrection! Even after Jesus told them what to expect, No one expected the resurrection! They stood around, trying to figure out the situation, in fear and amazement until two witnesses reminded everyone what Jesus had said all along. Jesus had told them time and time again that he would be betrayed, that he would be tried, and that he would be crucified. And he also said time and time again that on the third day, he would be resurrected. So why were they looking for the living among the dead? Why were they expecting bad news when there was such an abundance of grace and love? Why were they expecting darkness when there was so much good news to share!? No one expected the resurrection! A Victory over death! A gift of new life! No one saw this coming!

Because no one single follower of Jesus really expected for it to happen. No one expected the resurrection! No one expected the things that Jesus said to actually come true! Sure Jesus said a lot of things. Sure Jesus did a lot of things but

no one expected this! So wait does this mean that he really was the Son of God? And that's why it starts to sink in. suddenly everything changes! They begin experiencing the Risen Lord in their own lives, they realize that God really was and is in control, they realize that death really does not have the last word. They realize that love really will win each and every time! And they never saw it coming!

Come to think of it-Isn't it ironic that the very basic Easter message, the very thing we are celebrating today embraces our doubts and disbelief about the resurrection, that at its core the very basic Easter message expects us to wonder and worry if we can really trust the good news we are hearing this morning?

It is almost as if The Easter message is telling us that it is okay that we did not expect the resurrection to happen because there was someone did, someone who always expects it to happen. God! God was not surprised by the resurrection. God was not taken aback by the resurrection. God was not caught unawares by the news of the resurrection. God knew how it was going to end all along and now so do we! God wins each and every time! God is in control!

Hear the good news: God was not surprised by the resurrection on that first Easter morning so why should we be when it happens in our lives each and every day? Because Every time we experience God's grace in our lives, we experience the resurrection. Because Every time we experience God's love in our lives, we

experience the resurrection. Because Every time we experience the Risen Lord in our midst, we experience the resurrection. We experience the resurrection of our Lord and Savior all the time!

So really The resurrection should never be something that surprises us. The resurrection should never be something we don't expect. The good news is that it happens all the time. The good news is that God is in control. The good news is that love wins each and every time.

So as we gather this Easter morning, Here is what we know: We do not have to worry. We do not have to wonder because God is still redeeming us. God is still restoring God's creation. God is still renewing us. love wins each and every time. And this should never be a surprise for us as people of faith. We should never not expect the resurrection to happen in our lives as people of faith. We don't need to know how it happened. All we need to know is that it did happen. All we need to know is that it continues to happen each and every day, every time we experience the Risen Lord in our midst.

May we always expect the good news of God's grace and God's love in our lives each and every day. May we always expect the resurrection to happen in our lives each and every day. And regardless of what this world may say and do-may we always expect the freeing and life changing gift that sustains and give us hope:

the gift that reminds us that love will win each and every time! Thanks be to God!

Amen.