

Easter Sunday 2019

Luke 24:1-12

St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth 21/04/2019

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Christ is risen! Alleluia! Grace, peace, and Easter joy to you Brothers and Sisters, from God our Father, our Risen Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit. "On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." Let's pray:

He died but he's not dead. That's the paradox of Easter. It's the story we tell every year. It never changes. It always ends the same way. The stone has been rolled away and the tomb is empty. I can't explain how it happened but I want to be told again and again that it did happen. We all do. That's why we come here on this day, the Lord's Day, resurrection Sunday, week after week, year after year.

Like children with a favourite bedtime story we want to hear it one more time. We need to hear it one more time. Not because we think the story has changed or might end differently, but because our story, our individual life story, is constantly changing and we're just not sure how it will end. It anchors our story in his unchangeable story, his unchangeable promise, his unchangeable love.

Life is delicate. Relationships are fragile. We work to make changes and then go back to doing the same old thing. One day all is well, the next it's all different. The doctor gives a diagnosis. A spouse wants a divorce. We watch a parent struggle with dementia. We worry about our kids. A loved one dies. A job is lost. Sometimes it feels as if we are hanging on by a thread and getting more tired by the minute.

These and a thousand other stories are what we carry with us. They're stories of change, fear, loss, and death. They're the stories that took the women to the tomb in today's gospel. They're the stories we bring with us today and they're the reason we want and need to hear the Easter story one more time. So here it is.

The empty tomb lies at the heart of each of our stories. Regardless of what happens next in your story, the ending has already been written. The stone has been rolled away. Not so Jesus could get out, but so we can see in. There is no body. The tomb is empty. There is nothing there. And all of our stories end the same way. God has a future for us. That's the promise of Easter. That's what we come to hear and be told today. Christ is risen from the dead, which means that we too will rise from death to everlasting, trouble-free, joyous life.

You are forgiven for thinking that sometimes this all seems like a fairy tale, too good to be true, too improbable to be real, and too hard to believe. But think again. What do you think all fairy tales are based on? And look again. The stone has been rolled away. The tomb is empty. Listen to the story a thousand times. It will not change. Christ has risen! Our life has been guaranteed by God.

So what does that mean for us? It means we can quit looking for the living among the dead. It means we no longer have to look at the past and say, "If only." It means we no longer have to look at the future and worry, "What if?" It means that when someone asks about our loved ones who have passed away, we can say, "They died [whenever], but they're not dead." That is the truth of Easter and it is as true for each one of you and your losses and deaths as it is for me.

The stone has been rolled away and the tomb is empty. Christ is risen! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, fill your hearts and minds with joy and new life, in Christ Jesus our Risen Lord. Amen.