

Easter Sunday

Luke 24:1-12

“But 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.’ Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” (Luke 24:1-6)

Did you know that “Bread and buns baked on Good Friday will never go moldy; neither will eggs laid on that day spoil.” Seriously, it’s true!

Furthermore, you should not wash any clothes on Good Friday because they will never come clean! You know why? Because, “Christ cursed Good Friday washing after he was slapped in the face by a wet garment while being led to his crucifixion.” Believe me, it’s true!

And how many of you are wearing a new outfit or article of clothing today? Good, because if you weren’t, you might get spat on by a dog, or have a bird, flying overhead, soil your clothes or even worse - have your eyes pecked out by a bird! It’s true. Believe me, I heard it and it’s true!

So let me thank the many people who have taken the time to post these types of things on social media. These are what some would say are an “idle tale.” The phrase “idle tale” in Greek means the ranting of a person suffering from delirium.

There seems to be a lot of that type of ranting and sharing on social media today around the recent election and the virus and the vaccine. (Biden won. The virus is real. Please get the vaccine!)

Oh, and one more thing - Christ is risen! Risen indeed! Can I get an Alleluia!

Then again, what if Jesus rising from the grave was just another idle tale? The Disciples thought so when the first witnesses to the resurrection, the women, having gone to the tomb early to anoint the body of their dead friend, Jesus, instead found an empty tomb and messengers of God sharing that the

Good News that Christ is alive! Yet, when they ran back to tell the male disciples, the men believed the women to be suffering from delirium, and just sharing an "idle tale."

What do you believe? Is the resurrection of Jesus, for you, just an idle tale told by some women who were filled with grief, and didn't want to believe the reality of their friend, Jesus' death or is it believable?

While Easter provides us with a reason to celebrate the resurrection story many of us will stumble over the reality of the resurrection.

We are not alone. Many people struggle to believe the whole resurrection thing. Diane Butler Bass said, "**One of the great theological problems of old-style Protestant liberalism was the doctrine of the resurrection – it defied logic, reason, and human experience that a man would be raised from the dead. Having rejected the idea of the miraculous, the liberal tradition turned resurrection into an allegory or a spiritual metaphor.**" (*Sojourners* – www.sojo.net - posted April 4).

I have had many a conversation with people, like you, who faithfully follow Jesus right up to the crucifixion, but come Easter, well, they just don't believe the whole resurrection bit. Like the disciples, they too believe it is nothing more than an idle tale, based on an overactive imagination and not fact.

Let's face it, there may have been an empty tomb, but an empty tomb does not mean a dead man's body got up out of the grave and began appearing to the women, and later in the day, to the disciples.

As my seminary professor George Edwards used to argue – "**Where's the Body? Floating around in space somewhere?**" Many of us would agree. Like Thomas, show us the resurrected body, and not just an empty tomb and we too will believe!

So this morning, as you sit here listening and perhaps questioning the whole resurrection concept, let me come out of the theological closet and make a public confession – "**I believe in the resurrection of the body. I have seen it too many times in my life to not to believe in it.**"

Of course, you would expect me to say that especially from the pulpit.

While I do believe in the resurrection of the body and have seen much evidence of it in my ministry and my own life, I do not believe in the resuscitation of the body and there is a big theological difference between resuscitation and resurrection.

I am not sure what happened on that first morning. I do know that all four gospels and the other gospels all say something happened to the women at the tomb, to those disciples on the road, and too many others that transformed their lives and relationships forever.

I agree with Diane Butler Bass when she says: **“The resurrection is not an intellectual puzzle. Rather, it is a living theological reality, a distant event with continuing spiritual, human, and social consequences. The evidence for the resurrection is all around us. Not in some ancient text, Jesus bones, or a DNA sample. Rather, the historical evidence for the resurrection is Jesus living in us; it is the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, bringing back to life that which was dead. We are the evidence.”**

I see evidence of the resurrection in my own life, through Staci and Sam. I remember what it was like to be dead once, dwelling in an emotional and spiritual tomb, and to be raised to new life.

I believe we will see the resurrected body of Christ, appear this morning, among us, here in this cemetery as we regather even in the midst of a deadly pandemic. I further believe we see evidence of the resurrection in our own lives, as we break bread and drink from the cup and share our lives in faithful service out in the larger world.

I see the resurrected body of Christ every day when I am working in the schools or out in the community.

I see evidence of the resurrection every time we respect another person's divine humanity, welcoming them into our midst, feeding them, listening to them, offering them grace, healing and hope in Christ's name in a way that brings people to new life.

In your lives and the lives of many others, I have seen evidence of the resurrection even as together, we continue to roll the stone away from the many graves that seek to keep people from coming to the life that God offers all of us, a life and love that not even death can contain.

O yes, I believe in the resurrection. And you are my best evidence of it! Alleluia! As the church, we are the living, breathing, historical embodiment of the resurrection.

In a world filled with war and gun violence, greed, pain and grief, suffering and death, we offer evidence of the resurrection in the face of fear from terrorist attacks, war, mass shootings, and domestic violence. We offer evidence of the resurrection by being Christ's risen, compassionate and merciful presence in hospitals, hospices, care facilities and in cemeteries through our ministry. We offer evidence of the resurrection each time we interact with another person.

The resurrection of Jesus may seem like an “idle tale” to some, but for us it is a living reality.

We are the evidence of the resurrection and that my friends, is no idle tale.

Amen.