

An Idle Tale

Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-241
Corinthians 15:19-26
John 20:1-18

Luke 24:1-12 (from Vanderbilt Divinity Library)

24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

24:2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

24:3 but when they went in, they did not find the body.

24:4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

24:5 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.

24:6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,

24:7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

24:8 Then they remembered his words,

24:9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

24:10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.

24:11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

24:12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Luke 24:1-12 The Resurrection of Jesus

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. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' 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. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

I can't tell this story without getting emotional - and for so many reasons and I will try to share as many as possible today.

The first and, of course, most powerful reason is because of what this day means in our faith. "Yesterday" the apostles were at their lowest point. Their whole concept of life and who they were, who Jesus was, everything was just trashed! I imagine their heads just spinning - lost looks and tears in their eyes - speechless, scared, and weakened - and even one in their number hung himself! Terrible times for them.

And God - God had to wait and observe and suffer with Jesus as he was abused, insulted, tormented and executed. I believe God was not cold and distant as his son was suffering - God suffered with him, not only physically, but since we call him father - I imagine he suffered the same amount of pain any human father would while watching their child endure this kind of pain.

I believed he suffered with Jesus, having faith that Jesus would get through this period of time, knowing *that Jesus knew* that this was not the end – that this was a necessary phase from humanity - to divinity – to eternity. God trusted Jesus and Jesus knew God would not fail him.

And this is what is so amazing for us “Easter People” – because we see this day as a testament to hope overcoming all darkness – a new day – the morning sunshine – hope reigns all the time! Perhaps especially when it is the darkest of times.

I remember when I began to love mornings the best and that was in 3rd grade. In 3rd grade something painful, unjust and very embarrassing happened to me in my new school, and I thought I would die – I was sure I never wanted to face that school again, I was sure I would never recover.

And honestly, my life did change that day. I never recovered the friendships that I had and I never recovered the trust that I had in the school. But the night before I was to return to school, I prayed to God to help me get through the next day. And morning came. It was a beautiful sunny morning, and I woke up and felt that God had given me a new day – a new chance – each day was new – and I vowed never to lose sight of that hope that a new day brings. There were times when at night, I was sure I wanted to die – but the morning came – and always brought new promises of hope. And God was true - and life recovered and I found joy again, relatively quickly. So Easter Morning is a special time because it reminds us of the eternal hope of a new day. The world ain't gonna stop revolving – so why should we stop evolving?

Speaking of evolving – that reminds me of another of the reasons I love Easter Morning – and that is a topic near and dear to my heart. Feminism. I am 51 years old, so I was brought up during the civil rights era, a product of those times, but even in the early 80's, when I was in my 20's I was still sure that women shouldn't be in the ministry, and, for that matter many other professions. And I wasn't sure women should be paid the same wages for the same job.

But then I found myself mysteriously drawn to this one building I had been driving by – so in stepping in there, I discovered it was a seminary – and I wasn't even really sure what a seminary was. So I went inside and told them that I couldn't be accepted here, because I was a woman. And they told me otherwise.

They pointed out to me the vital role that the women played throughout Jesus' ministry and the building of the early church. The Samaritan Woman at the well - in John chapter 4 – early in the story - was the first to whom Jesus clearly told who he actually was. She said she knew a Messiah was coming – and Jesus said, “I am he.” Martha and Mary knew it long before the Disciples guessed it. The women were there at the cross when the men were hiding and denying. The women were the first to know that Jesus had arisen from the dead. And these are only a few examples of the vital role that women played in Jesus' times. And I am sure that each and every one of you knows a woman who has inspired and lead your faith in amazing ways – and I could name a few just from the short time I've been here.

But can you imagine how I felt? I felt so strongly called to serve God, and felt like I could not because of the social stereotypes that I had been taught! And to have that lifted! That was a resurrection moment for me! And it still is practically every time I preach a sermon! To me Easter Morning, where the women were the first to know – and because Jesus should so much acceptance and understanding for women during his ministry – Easter resurrection is a resurrection of my life calling.

And it is a message to all the people throughout the world who feel oppressed! Do you feel like there is something in the world that hinders whatever God is calling you to do? This is your moment to know – God is on your side – there will be a way cleared for you to fulfill your destiny!

But the final most prevalent reason I hold onto as why I love Easter morning is because those who doubted the women when they returned to the hiding place – those who thought it was nothing but an idle Tale – were proven wrong! We all often hear from people who see our faith as something that is an “Idle Tale”. Even those who thought they knew and loved Jesus the most doubted the validity of this day! How can we expect

those people who haven't been able to experience the power of the resurrected Christ in their hearts - how can we expect them to believe?

Well, I see that as a promise of this day - a hope and a goal. The hope for those soul on this earth to recognize that Jesus' life is a message of love, forgiveness and the power of compassion. Faith in God - IS NOT ONLY AN IDLE TALE!

We are here because we know that it is no idle tale - we know that God is near us - we face the day and see our faults and believe that tomorrow we can get up again and face the mistakes from yesterday and hope for Justice tomorrow . . . May our Lord Jesus Christ rise every day in our hearts - now and forevermore!

Amen