

### **Pastor Roy's Sermon from April 5, 2015 (Easter)**

Grieving, they move toward the tomb, carrying everything they need to anoint for burial this one whom they loved, who loved them and everyone else he met. Everything happened so quickly. And now he is gone. Death has a way of bringing carefully made plans, hopes, and dreams to a stand-still. Grief freezes everything in place. Values and priorities change with unexpected losses.

These women are in shock. Perhaps denial, likely some anger at the unfairness, maybe quietly at Jesus for not being more careful to avoid confrontation with the religious leaders and Rome. It was messy, now. But before they sorted through it all, they had this one last labor of love to complete. Then they would have to go on with their lives.

They arrive. How did the stone get rolled back? They enter to find a young man brightly dressed, sitting in the tomb. That was frightening enough, but then he speaks, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, see for yourself. Go, tell the others and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there." But they fled in terror and amazement, and said nothing because of fear.

The women's confusion and failure to speak or to figure out what was going on around them mirrors our own faith journeys. Have you had experiences of which you have spent the rest of your life trying to figure out, or maybe forget, what happened?

Is it any wonder they fled and told no one at first?

Is disbelief simply a step in putting to order the details of our story? Is faith a matter of figuring out what it means to believe while living our story? Is disbelief for us, like the women simply an honest reaction to the complexity of our lives and our trouble understanding what's going on around and within us? Mark is telling us it's ok to flee in fear, to disbelieve. In fact, it's normal and to be expected. Isn't that what Peter and John and the others did before Jesus' death? They did not understand what was going on, so they ran, or stayed at a safe distance.

We all need time to practice our faith. And we must be honest with ourselves so that we can allow the Spirit to weave the story of faith out of the fiber of our lives. Easter's resurrection story is not one size fits all. And we need not jump straight into some kind of celebration of that which we clearly do not understand fully. If the women and men who walked with Jesus could not understand what was going on, how can we, even though we've heard the stories so many times. We've told or remembered our own stories quite often. But we still don't understand them. So it's ok if some years we just aren't too sure about what we're celebrating today. Faith is more important than surety.

When we say, "The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!" We are confessing our faith. We are not claiming to have it all figured out, just that Christ is alive. The truth of the Gospel of grace and peace is alive. Life has conquered death. Death does not reign supreme. Christ has triumphed.

Resurrection matters. Before Jesus, many of the Jews believed that there would be a resurrection in which their bodies would be reunited with their Spirits. Do we have to believe exactly as they believed in their time and space? No.

But our faith calls us to look for signs of resurrection around us. We seek the hope of God inviting us to live our lives without fear. Oh, there will be fear, but faith calls forth courage from us. Believing is turning toward the Spirit of God and learning to rest in God's mercy and peace. We don't have to have all the answers. But we can start with the images of life and love all around us. The images of resurrection beginning with the ongoing life of our Lord lived out in our own lives. This is the miracle of Easter. He is alive. We are alive. We share his life. We share it with one another. Thanks be to God.