A.M.D.G. Easter Sunday – C Text: Luke 24: 1-12

 April 21, 2019

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women 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.

**Christ Is Risen And On The Loose**

I don't know what ***you*** see when you look toward the front every Sunday – but I can tell you that from my perspective looking back at all of you each week can be very interesting! I must say – most of you listen fairly attentively when I'm preaching – but it is not unusual to see a head nodding as someone dozes off. I've also watched people looking at the ceiling, surreptitiously texting or working on their I Pads or doodling on their bulletins. It is somewhat reassuring, then – to realize that the first Christian sermon ever preached did not register very high on the Richter scale either. When the women came back from the cemetery on Easter morning, they brought with them word of an empty tomb and astonishing news: *"He is not here – but is risen!"* And the response? You might expect astonishment, joy, amazement! Surely the disciples will receive the news with something like the first rendition ever sung of '*Jesus Christ is Risen Today'*. Wrong! Instead, the translations differ – you can take your pick. They tell us that the words seemed to the apostles as 'an idle tale', 'empty talk', 'a silly story', 'a foolish yarn', 'utter nonsense' 'sheer humbug'!

Why? The women have come with a revolutionary announcement: "He is risen!" – so why do the apostles dismiss the first news of Easter with a wave of the hand? Some have suggested that this initial Easter proclamation was poorly received because the messengers were *women*. The Mishna – the Jewish book interpreting God's laws, states. *"From women, let not evidence be accepted because of the levity and temerity of their sex."*

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And the gender of the speakers may very well have been part of the reason for the apostle's indifference – but not all of it. After all – according to the gospel writer, Luke – the women were confirming a message that Jesus himself had already told the disciples. Before he entered Jerusalem, he informed them that he would be killed – but on the third day rise again. So when the women came racing back with the news that these words had come to pass – that all they had found was an empty tomb, and that Jesus had, indeed, risen from the dead - the disciples should have been prepared – eager, even – certainly receptive. Instead – they yawned, checked their watches, and wondered when the sermon would end so that they could shuffle off to coffee hour!

One suspects, then – a deeper and more complex reason for writing off the women's proclamation. Like the Emmaus Road travelers in the story that follows, they are not just indifferent to the news of Easter – they are resistant. Should we be surprised then – when a technologically sophisticated world calls the Christian faith an idle tale and reacts with disbelief? Whatever exactly happened on that Easter morning – if the resurrection is somehow mysteriously, gloriously '*true'* – then life as we know it changes. And the disciples knew that. If the story ended on Friday – they could simply be alumni of Jesus' school of religion – students of an inspiring, though tragic teacher. But if the news of Easter is ***true*** – then the Spirit of Jesus is no longer confined – but has been turned loose into the world. And everywhere we go – we may find ourselves encountering him in surprising ways – in unexpected places.

If Easter is *true* – we begin to feel the touch of his hand on ours as we feed the hungry, or sit with someone who is grieving. If Easter is *true -*  we may start to recognize his eyes looking back at us from the faces of those we encounter each day – and from the wounded and hurting ones we see in the media. If Easter is *'true'* – then it is ***our*** hands and feet which become the body of Christ in the world.

On this Easter Sunday, we proclaim that Christ is risen – and on the loose. And like the women at the tomb, and the first apostles – we find it perplexing – hard to believe – amazing! Yes – all of that and more. But thank God – we also know, in some mysterious, glorious, wonderful way – it is **'*true*'.** And from the depths of our hearts, we give thanks. Alleluia!