**Easter Sermon: "Everything In Between: Grief & Hope"**
*Squamish United Church*

*April 20, 2025*
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***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.
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.

**Prayer of Illumination**

Welcome to Easter morning—this bright, blooming day where balloons fly through the air reminding us of the Risen Christ. “Alleluia” rings out, and colours of spring splash across the sanctuary like sunrise. Today, we proclaim the boldest news of our faith: that death does not have the last word. That love lives. That Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed!

But first, I want to say this clearly:
If you are carrying grief this morning… you are not alone.
If your joy feels muted or hesitant, or even out of reach… you are not alone.
If your body is here but your heart is still at the tomb…
Then this story, dear ones, is especially for you.

**The Women at the Tomb**

Luke’s gospel begins Easter morning not with trumpets or celebration—but with heartbreak.

“The women came to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.”

These are women who have been with Jesus through everything. Through healing and laughter, long journeys and shared meals. Through betrayal, torture, and death. They come now to honour him in the only way they can: by preparing his body and tending to his memory. Today will say their names, because being known matters. Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James come to the tomb.

These three courageous women arrive in grief. A deep, sacred grief that is both personal and communal. They have lost not just a friend, but hope itself.

They are not wrong to grieve. Grief is not weakness.
Grief is not faithlessness. Grief is love, stretched out across the silence of death.

And then— *(pause)*
Then they encounter something completely unexpected.

The stone is rolled away. The tomb is empty.
And two men in dazzling clothes ask, *“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here—he is risen.”*

It’s a moment of holy disorientation. Their world shifts. Their understanding cracks open. And still, they don’t fully grasp it until they do one simple thing:

They remember. Luke says, *“Then they remembered his words.”*

Sometimes, what rekindles the ember of hope is a memory.

On Friday many of you came to the Good Friday service and witnessed Jesus’ last breath. And then you joined in the Fish Fry Family Picnic and stood together in our grief around the fire where the embers of hope held us in community. This was Jesus’ wake.

Words of love were spoken.
Stories were shared.

Laughter abounded even in the midst of grief.

I imagine that this was not the cause when Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James came to the tomb. For they in grief.

But then, the women remember Jesus’ promise: that death would not hold him. And in that remembering, something shifts. They *run* to share the news.

This is not the joyful proclamation we might expect, though.
They tell the others—and what do they hear in return?

“That’s nonsense,” the disciples say.
Luke’s word in the Greek is *leros*—meaning nonsense. Delirious mutterings. This has been a Lenten season full of muttering and here it is again.
Like so many who grieve, their truth is met not with belief, but dismissal.

**But Grief and Hope Can Coexist**

Here’s where the story lives up to the title of our series: *Everything In Between.*

Because grief doesn’t disappear at the tomb. But hope breaks in anyway.

Peter hears the women’s words—he doesn’t believe them either, not fully.
But something compels him to *go.* To run. To see for himself.

He is not all **in**, but he’s not all **out** either. He’s somewhere in the in-between.

And friends—that’s often where resurrection begins.

Not in certainty.
Not in emotional fireworks.
But in the in-between space of curiosity, ache, and longing.
Of still not knowing—but needing to know more.

Maybe you’re like the women this morning—coming here with oils in hand, grief in your heart, and no idea how the stone will be rolled away.

Maybe you’re like Peter—skeptical, stunned, somewhere between despair and desire.

Or maybe you’re like the other disciples, who just… can’t believe… Not yet.

However you arrived this Easter morning—whether with a shout of joy or a whisper of doubt—resurrection is still for you.

You don’t need to “feel” Easter for it to be true.
You don’t need to sing louder or smile wider.
You just need to show up. Like the women did. Like Peter did.

Because resurrection doesn’t wait for perfect conditions.
It shows up in graveyards. In early morning stillness. In fear. In disbelief.
In the mess and middle of it all.

The writer and preacher Jeff Chu said this:
“Grief is liminal, not terminal.
Meaning—grief is a threshold, not the end.
It’s something we walk through, not something that defines us forever.

We don’t dishonour our grief by holding onto hope.
We don’t erase our sorrow by trusting in resurrection.

This Easter, we don’t ask you to set your grief aside.
We simply invite you to make room.
Room for both lilies and lament.
For “Alleluia” and ache.
For beauty that may not fix everything, but reminds us that everything is not lost.”

Friends, Christ is risen.
Not because the world is neat and tidy.
Not because our hearts are fully healed.
But because God meets us in everything in between.

In the tomb **and** in the garden.
In grief **and** in wonder.
In disbelief **and** in joy.

So come as you are. Because we are an Easter people.
Bring your tears, your doubts, your questions, your praise.
And let resurrection rise—rise like a sea of balloons - not in perfection, but in presence.

Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Amen