

Easter Sunday
April 21, 2019
Church of the Advent
Rev. Ellen Richardson

Christ is Risen

Good morning, Alleluia! Christ is risen! On behalf of the congregation--some here present and some who are celebrating Easter with their loved ones elsewhere, I would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone this fine morning--especially our guests, friends, neighbors, and those who have traveled some distance to be with family and to worship here on this joyous day that for Christians has no equal. The flowers are beautiful, the music heavenly, the threatening weather is past, and everyone, young and old is looking good! And Easter Sunday morning in church is a wonderful place to trigger all kinds of Easter memories that most of us probably only pull out of our emotional storage closets this time of year.

For me that means scrolling *way* back to remember waking up with that bit of excitement on Easter morning to see what new plush baby animal toy the Easter Bunny had left in my Easter basket full of plastic grass and littered with jelly beans, before I would be shoved into tight shiny new patent leather shoes and a scratchy new dress with the required matching hat. You might think this is a false memory, but I have the pictures to prove it, and I bet many of you have some that are very similar.

Later down the road were the years *I* would spend searching for those perfect plush toys for my own kids before filling up their baskets with real dyed eggs created from those little Paas tablets of color dropped into cups of vinegar, and just the right amount of Starbursts and Skittles to balance out the hollow chocolate bunnies and Peeps. Easter breakfast was always meant to be special: waffles or blueberry pancakes, even though everyone knew the *real* breakfast on Easter morning was a buffet of Hershey's chocolate kisses and tiny solid chocolate eggs wrapped in pastel foil. The flotsam and jetsam of Easter was always made up of tiny bits of multicolored foil and stray strands of that green plastic grass that got everywhere, needing to be picked up for weeks. Those were the days, right? Now that my kids are grown and gone, I have figured out that those pretty bags of Easter candy from Walgreens have become dangerous to have around,

because you can't just eat one or two Hershey's kisses, right? But letting go the Easter baskets and their promise of a sugar coma just makes more time and space to ponder what Easter is really all about--Good News that even at its beginning was considered to be an *idle tale*.

This morning we heard the Easter story from the Gospel of Luke. Like all versions of the story of the Resurrection, it begins with *the women*. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna and others had walked into the early dawn to the tomb where Jesus had been laid about 36 hours earlier, bringing spices and ointments to treat his body according to custom; after the trauma of his death and his hasty burial before the Sabbath sundown on Friday evening, they had not been allowed to do this properly. They must have been carrying a mixed bag of emotions along with their jars of spices: sadness, disappointment, anger, and confusion along with a the determination of women *on a mission* to do the right thing for Jesus, whom they had loved. In any case when they got to the tomb another couple of emotions were piled on: surprise and terror. The sealing stone that made a door for the tomb was gone, and two strangers in dazzling white were standing there saying, *Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but risen*.

This was an interesting way of revealing the most important event ever. These men the other gospels call angels spoke of the Resurrection not only as something that should have been *expected*, but something Jesus himself had told the disciples would happen. With the news barely sinking in, the women went back to their community and told them what had happened--and no one believed them. *No one* believed them; they accused the women of telling an *idle tale*.

Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself what had caused the women to tell a story so incredible, or maybe *just in case...* When he arrived he found the linens used to cover the body of Jesus left on the slab, and no body. Who took it and why? Who would risk carrying a body without its wrappings? What was going on? Peter did not stick around any longer than the women did. He did not investigate; he did not go to the authorities to demand an explanation. He just went home, amazed. Probably stunned. So much for the idle tale.

It always seems to be such an irony that the most wonderful thing ever--the Resurrection of the death-overcoming One--that thing we celebrate with joyful traditional worship, beautiful Spring flowers, uplifting music, new clothes and over the top treats, happened unwitnessed in the empty dark, it's messengers being strangers acting like it was no big deal, that no one should be shocked, because Jesus had already said it was going to happen. But like many important moments in life, it sometimes takes a while to fully process the significance of what at first seemed an idle tale. That is why our Easter traditions includes a trip to church, to remind us that as Easter people, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to spend a lifetime pondering and processing what that thing--that Resurrection thing--was really all about, and what it could mean in our lives not just once a year when the pastel M&M's hit the shelves, but *every* day of *every* year *between* the Easter Sundays. The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Happy Easter, because that was no idle tale. Amen

