

Resurrection Promises

As the women approach and see that the stone has rolled away... as they discover that now empty tomb, we feel their excitement. Suddenly, unexpectedly the world changed around them. The things they thought they knew about God's world – about life and death and fear and hope-- were turned upside-down.

As we hear the story again, we cry out "Christ is Risen!" We feel the joy. But tomorrow, as we resume our day-to-day lives, will the Easter joy remain? This wonderful event that we celebrate today happened 2000 years ago, and sometimes it doesn't feel as if our world has really changed at all. We feel more like Good Friday people than Easter people, surrounded by death and destruction. The war in Ukraine continues, the shooting at a Florida University shocks us all and reminds how vulnerable we are. Economic instability creates uncertainty and fear for the future. And we all carry with us our own personal tragedies of grief, suffering, despair.

That empty tomb seems so far away... and the voice of God seems to be silent.

Or does it?

Today we have heard the voice of God... a voice penetrating through the darkness, bringing in the light. Covenantal promises made generations ago to people in times of crisis and fear. The same voice that ushered in creation, called the rainbow into being and led the people to freedom... a voice promising new creation, new hope. That voice and the everlasting promises continue to speak to us today.

Our God is a still-speaking God.

This Easter Sunday, I say to you – God is still speaking directly to each of us, right here right now. The voice of God meets us in unexpected places... in the bleak wilderness and in empty tombs; in sanctuaries and on the street.

God is still speaking to us and we are in the right place, at the right time, to hear that Holy Voice. Just as in that glorious moment on that first Easter

morning, when the women realized that they had heard God's voice directly, God is speaking directly to each of us now .

In Jesus, we hear God 's voice reminding us that love is worth the risk... telling us that relationships are worthwhile... promising us that life is worth living, that life can be joyful and hope-filled, even in the face of life's most difficult moments... especially in those moments.

God's voice echoing through an empty tomb and through the generations that followed.

Jesus' ministry before his death on the Cross ushered in the beginning of the world that God promises to us. It was not just the sound of his voice – it was everything he did for us -- his healing, his forgiving, his teaching, his breaking bread with any who would eat with him... as his words and actions spoke to the people, he gathered a community who would continue these practices in remembrance of him. Here we find a glimpse of God's kingdom, where Isaiah's vision of new creation is fulfilled. When Jesus was crucified, dying a death considered shameful, people thought this was the end for Jesus, the end of his movement. "He was only a man," they thought, "not the promised one... not the Christ."

Here was the proof others sought that Jesus was wrong about what God wanted from humanity, wrong in saying that his gathering and blessing the impure and outcast was God's action, wrong about all of those outrageous teachings we try to explain away.

But then the God of Israel raised Jesus from the dead and turned the world upside-down. The resurrection of the righteous that some expected at the end has already started, and everything that Jesus said about and did to bring about God's kingdom has been affirmed by the God who raised him.

God has raised Jesus from the dead, and showed us in no uncertain terms that death and destruction never have the last word! There is no need to wait for some distant day when Jesus will return. We are already living in the Easter light and God needs us all to participate in the newness of creation. To bring about that Kingdom that Jesus ushered in in that dramatic moment of emptiness.

God is still speaking, and God is speaking through us. And the Good News of that first Easter morning is exactly why we should go out and continue Christ's work in the world as modern day disciples... to be the hands and feet of Christ and do our part for the Kingdom.

St. Francis said, "Preach the gospel always, if necessary use words." So, go out this day and tell everyone the Good News of God's upside down love – in everything you say and everything you do.

Go out and preach the good news of God's kingdom in ways more powerful than words -- in doing justice, in proclaiming peace, in embracing the outcast, in treating the most vulnerable of God's children with the care we'd give our own family. In the breaking of bread and the sharing of love with each other. In Easter, God has given us all the proof we need that the time has come to hear that Holy Voice and respond in faith:

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

Alleluia! Alleluia! And Amen!