

Date: March 27, 2016
 Scriptures: I Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12
 Title: Resurrected Life

My Lord, what a morning!
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 When the stone was rolled away
 The son has risen
 and earth can breathe again.
 The cross decorated with flowers
 and the church dressed in white,
 and the sweet fragrance of Easter lilies
 all, they all proclaim the truth
 of this holy day.

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Such a beautiful day!
 What a difference a week makes.
 A week ago, you were waving palm fronds
 to welcome Jesus as he entered Jerusalem.
 A week ago, our entire family --
 that's my husband George and me,
 daughters Angela and Michelle,
 and Michelle's husband, Juan, and four sons,
 Zac, Alex, Matthew, and Nico --
 boarded a plane bound for Quebec.

Within a twelve hour period,
 we went from a warm, sunny climate
 to a bitterly cold, snowy one.
 "Why?" you might ask.
 Our grandchildren wanted to go skiing,
 and whenever we are invited to spend time with them,
 we are like our mail carrier.
 Neither rain nor sleet nor snow can keep us away.

Quebec is an enchanting, vibrant, bustling city,
 and the house we rented,
 perched on a high bluff,
 gave us a spectacular view

of the mighty St. Lawrence River.

It snowed through one night
 and off and on for two days.
 Signs of winter were everywhere.
 So you can imagine my amazement
 when we ducked into a bakery
 and saw the pastel colors of Easter
 flanked by chocolate bunnies and chicks
 and a wide assortment
 of Easter baskets and candies.

It was jarring to think of Easter
 being celebrated in the midst of winter.
 Yet, Easter was less than two weeks away,
 and the people of Quebec were clearly
 going to celebrate it snow and all.
 To be sure, nothing in all creation
 can subvert resurrected life.

Resurrected life was not on the women's minds
 when they headed to the tomb
 that first Easter Sunday.

Three are named,
 Mary Magdalene, the one Jesus cured of mental illness,
 Joanna, the wife of Herod Antipas' administrator,
 and Mary, the mother of James and Joses.

Other unnamed women go with them.

Theirs is a mission of mercy.

They go to clean and anoint Jesus' body
 and wrap it in a proper burial shroud.

They know what they will find,
 a body badly abused
 that has lain in a desert tomb three days.

Their love for Jesus spurs their action.

Yet, what the women find is not what they expect.

The stone has been rolled away,
 and the yawning mouth of the tomb reveals
 he is not there.

Though the women do not realize it,
 the world they know has been radically reorganized
 and never again will be the same.

We have heard this story so many times,
 we are desensitized to how truly shocking it is.

Let me retell it changing the cast of characters.

You and a few good friends decide
 to take flowers to the grave
 of a recently deceased friend.

As you get out of the car
 and approach your friend's final resting place,
 you see mounds of dirt encircling it.

Perplexed and perhaps a bit terrified,
 you continue walking toward the grave.

Once there, its yawning mouth reveals
 that the casket has been removed.

I invite you to allow that story
 to become your reality for a moment.

Let it touch you
 that you might get in touch
 with how the women felt
 on seeing Jesus' tomb empty.

The women felt all you are feeling and more,
 because it happened to them in real time.

Their terror intensified dramatically
 when two men in dazzling clothes
 appeared and said to them,
 "Why do you seek the living among the dead?
 He is not here, but he has risen."

Dear Friends, the heart of the Easter message
 is the men's question,
 "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

I dare say many of us have done this.
 Sought life from the dead of this world,
 from things that cannot and will never promote life.

We turn to alcohol or drugs or food or incessant activity
 to blunt our anxiety and emotional pain.

We seek success and the toys it buys
 to silence the voice that says we are not enough
 and will never be enough.

We lust after power and the doors it opens
 in an effort to control our environment

and so feel safe and secure.

And, in our quest for life,
 we don't only look for the living among the dead.
 We also drag the corpses
 of long dead ideas and ideals behind us.
 We cling
 to broken dreams,
 long-held anger and resentment,
 unrelenting feelings of guilt and shame,
 old ways of thinking and doing,
 misguided perceptions,
 stubborn insistence on doing things our way.

We all have a tendency to do these things ~
 both seek life from death
 and drag death into life.

All the while, we reassure ourselves we are living.

But, are we?

To be sure, we are alive.

Yet, is that kind of life truly life?

Is it the life that

fills us a sense of meaning, purpose, and joy?

The kind of life that

gets us out of the bed in the morning

and lets us rest secure at night?

The kind of life to which the angels call our attention
 that first Easter Sunday?

This I know as well as I know my own name.

We can never squeeze life out of things that deal death

nor can we have life

if we are dragging death around behind us

like a ball and chain.

Only life begets life.

This is the truth the angels tell

the amazed and bewildered women

as they stand there holding

the unneeded spices and burial clothes.

"He is not here; he has risen."

Life bring forth life

and nothing,
 not even death in its many and varied guises,
 can overcome life.

The empty tomb proclaims THAT life, resurrected life,
 is God's will for creation.

Resurrected life
 is God's will for you and for me and for all people.
 It offers us new life,
 new possibility,
 new opportunity.

It is out there waiting for us every time
 we find ourselves seeking the living among the dead
 or dragging death into life.

In his living and in his dying,
 Jesus shows us what resurrected life looks like.

It is life in which
 all are welcome no matter how far they have wandered,
 and meals are shared with enemies,
 and help is offered to the sick and helpless,
 and prophetic challenge spoken to the powerful.

It is life lived beyond ourselves,
 life lived in solidarity
 with God and God's people
 and God's good creation.

Life lived beyond ourselves,
 resurrected life,
 allows us to live in a wholly new and newly whole way.

When we are living the resurrected life,
 we can proclaim with all the saints of the ages,
 "Oh, death where is your sting?
 Oh, death, where is your victory?
 It has been swallowed up in victory!"

It has been swallowed up in resurrected life.
 This is the one great truth woven through all creation,
 the truth of which the angels speak,
 the truth that gladdens every heart
 stirs our imagination,
 fuels our will.

It is the truth that
 He has risen!

He has risen indeed!
Alleluia! Amen!