

Easter Sunday Year C April 20 2025

Luke 24:1-12

It was women who approached the place of their dashed dreams and hopes. I believe they approached the tomb out of respect and love for Jesus. They were on autopilot performing a burial rite of their tradition as they were grieving. When they looked up and saw that the stone, that was placed to seal the tomb, had been moved. I am sure they had thoughts of laments, and their further dreadful thinking was about was it not enough to torture Jesus to death, but now his body had been further desecrated by grave robbers. They were expecting to find the stink of death and Jesus' body to be unrecognizable by more damage, and yet the women found nothing. Let me say that again, they found nothing.

When the angels appeared to the puzzled and grieving women there was not great joy or excitement but fear. The grief of Jesus death was still strong. However, the women did not flee from the angels. They listened to what they were told and then they remembered what Jesus had taught. In that encounter they were no longer pursuing a dead dream but discovering life and their hope was rekindled.

The two angels had a radical message for the grieving and crushed women. God showed the world starting with those who had longed for dignity the message that death had been defeated. However, the moment overwhelmed the women as they threw themselves on the ground out of fear. Then the angels asked a bold question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen."

The women who were of no and little status in the eyes of others were entrusted with the message of God's hope for all creation. They were the first to give the world the hope that we all long for and still today dare ask, "Is it true?" Can we love one another in ways that bring about life and love in a world that knows hate and death?

The answer is yes.

The disciple had great hopes that Jesus would overcome their adversaries and liberate their people from being held under the foot of the Roman Empire. They only sought to have their homelands be freed from outside influence. They longed for glory days of the past. They saw glimpses of Jesus strength and power, but Jesus did it by healing people. Jesus restored broken relationships

among family, friends and enemies. **Jesus spoke and acted with power that was not from human skill, but of God.**

They hoped their hearts and mind to the possibility that Jesus was really the One, **the Messiah, God's anointed one**, who was going to liberate people from their fears. **Yet, he was destroyed at his opportune moment to declare his power to rule.** He was exposed to be a simple man. **Jesus could save others, but he could not save himself.** Those who had no ability to protect themselves from those of influence lost their hope that Jesus would save them. **Jesus was killed and nobody comes back from that.** Not only that, but the disciples also put their own lives on the line for Jesus, and they too are now resigned to experience an awful death.

It is hard to watch a dream die. Children when they first discover their imagination start to see the world in a sense of wonder. **There is nothing that cannot be done and they talk in such ways.** Then life happens to them. **They get disappointed when their well thought out plans don't materialize.** They experience failure and they don't know why. **So, children embrace the idea that they only need to try harder, to be stronger, to be bolder.** Those ideas work until they don't. **Then another disappointment occurs.** Doubt becomes stronger in their minds. **Over time there is a sense of why even hope in the first place, because that dream will betray them.** **This betrayal will occur when they need it to be the strongest.** These repeated losses then turn inward, and **self-loathing and shame replaces the sense of wonder and hope.**

It is hard to keep hope alive when defeat and disappointments occurs in our lives. **We can point to many examples of how life does not work out.** Our victories become fewer and fewer, and we tell ourselves that our hope will not be realized. **Yet, there is something deeper stirring within each and every one of us that continues to hope against all odds, asking ourselves, will this time be different? Will this time my dream come true? Can I dare to dream after so many painful defeats?** The answer surprises us.

The promise of Easter is about where do we look for Jesus.

Dr. Nancy Pittman who teaches at Phillips Theological Seminary as a lesson for us to learn from Luke:

(quote) **"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" the angelic figures say to the tops of the woman's heads.** We are just as guilty of such fruitless search. **We too want to tend to the corpses of long dead ideas and ideals.** We cling to former visions of ourselves and our churches as if they might come back to life as long as we hold on to them. **We grasp our loved ones too tightly, refusing to**

allow them to change, to become bigger, or smarter, or stronger. We choose to stay with what we know in our hearts to be dead, because it is safe, malleable, and so susceptible to burnishing through private memory. The words of the unworldly messengers are a challenge to stop hanging on to the dead and to move into new life. They are reminders that the Holy One dwells wherever new life bursts forth. (end of quote)

Easter is about having our hopes and dreams renewed. Let's be honest here, we are busy looking at what is wrong in the world. So, we find ourselves walking among the graveyards of our unfulfilled promises and hopes.

My friend told me that we are doomed as a species and her was my response to her lament. It may look like we are doomed as a species, and you are right, however, there is another powerful force in play. It is love and this love will not be defined by death. Easter is about seeing this entire world in a different way. We are invited to see death, as not the enemy, but knowing it is the other way around; it is love gives death its proper context.

Love seeks to bring about what can be. Love also understands that when a sacrifice has a purpose is to transform the individual and the world. Love can show us and the world that there is a way of being that opens up rather than closing down. So, embrace this new promise.

When Jesus walked out of that tomb, he left behind the narrative that death ends all hope. Jesus left behind mortality and rejoined the living. We will not find Jesus embedded in our fears and walking among hate. Jesus is not there. He left death and hate behind and so we are asked to do the same.

Yes, we are like the woman on that early Easter morning. We throw ourselves on the ground out of fear. Do we fear that this is another example among a line of examples of how our dreams will be ripped from us again? When we encounter this fearful thought, it will serve us well to remember of what Jesus taught us. Jesus is about life and love. Hate and fear have been defeated, and we are given permission to dream and be bold with our hopes.

Today, and the days to come, we find our deepest hopes fueled by our courage to dream once again. We no longer stare at the empty tomb expected defeat. We turn around and find Jesus already restoring what had been broken.

Jesus defeated death by embracing the hate and death that focused on him and then responded with life and love. This is our moment to rediscover and open our minds and hearts to the idea that mercy, grace, forgiveness, and love is more powerful than hate, fear, and death.

We no longer look for our deepest hopes located in a grave, but we find our renewed hope among the living.

This Easter day will draw to a close. Most churches will return to their normal life. Yet, the Episcopal Church understands a greater and bolder truth. Easter is not a one-day event, it is a season. When we grasp the truth of Jesus did, him coming back from the dead, we will need time to grapple with this event. We need time for our heads to catch up with our hearts. We need time to remember what Jesus taught us with a new set of ears to hear and eyes to see. We need to stop looking at an empty tomb and look for Jesus among the living. We will not be disappointed.

Let us take a deep breath and exhale the disappointments of our past. Lets us be like Peter and run to the future know that Jesus is among us now, living, celebrating, and freeing us to love more fully, deeply, and truly.

Let's make this hope alive.