

Easter Day
April 4, 2010
Saint Ann's, Old Lyme

On this day, the Lord has acted; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen. Alleluia!

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: the bodily resurrection of someone who'd been dead for three days. That's why we're here today, right? That's why the flowers and the fanfare and the glorious music. Right?

Except, ... that it couldn't have happened. Let's face it, the resurrection of someone who'd been dead for three days is all but unbelievable. The resurrection of someone who'd been dead for three days would have to be one of those "if-I-hadn't-seen-it-with-my-own-eyes -I-wouldn't-believe it" events. And, ... apparently, nobody actually did see it happen. At least nobody witnessed it and immediately wrote it down. And don't you imagine that if anyone had seen it, it would have been recorded somewhere, by someone.

So by all that's logical, the Resurrection simply couldn't have happened, and the only evidence that it did happen was a tomb that was empty. Nevertheless, here we are, all spiffed up, with flowers and fanfare, celebrating an event that couldn't have happened.

It would make more sense, don't you think, if we all gathered for our big event on Good Friday. At least we have eyewitnesses for that event. We also understand Good Friday; we understand all too well about Good Friday. Because even though the trial and scourging and death happened to Jesus, it's our story, too, because pain and betrayal and defeat and death are all around us.

But Easter, well, Easter is something else again. Flying right in the face of everything that is logical and even believable, a dead body burst from a tomb. How do we explain that? The fact is, we can't. So, what's going on here? Is Easter just an unexplainable event? - an excuse to dress up and eat chocolate eggs? Or does it mean something?

Does it make a difference – in your life and in mine – that the tomb was empty?

We're not the first to ask that question. On the very first Easter, women came to the tomb where the body had been, but the body wasn't there. Luke, the Gospel writer, tells us that the women were 'perplexed'. Well, of course they were perplexed. They didn't jump for joy and say, 'hot dog, this must be the first Easter'. They didn't run out and buy new hats, or sit down and write the Alleluia Chorus, or sing Welcome Happy Morning.

No, those women were 'perplexed'. What could it mean that the body wasn't there? And what difference might it make? Well, those women did what perplexed people do. They found their friends and told them what they'd encountered. No doubt they told it with great hesitation and in incomplete sentences, because they didn't understand it any more than we do.

But they gathered and tried as best they could to wrap their hearts and minds around what it might mean that the tomb was empty, and what difference it might make in their lives. And the first thing they discovered is that if a dead body can break out of a tomb, then all of life is radically changed. There's no way it can't be changed.

Life is radically changed, because the very possibility of resurrection – of new life in dead places – means that no matter what, there's always hope. There's always hope, even in situations that feel pretty hopeless, and we don't give up on ourselves or the world out there, because Resurrection means that God has refused to give up on us. And that alone means that life is radically changed.

Resurrection means that while the crucified Christ has entered the 'Good Friday' places of the world – where sickness and hatred and sin dwell – the risen Lord has conquered those places. And life is radically changed. We don't know how it happens that the Risen Lord conquers sin and betrayal and cruelty. We're just as perplexed as those women at the tomb.

But we don't have to 'make sense' of the Resurrection. After all, the Resurrection is never 'explained', any more than it was actually witnessed. The Resurrection is never explained; it is always announced. So we don't have to 'prove' the Resurrection; we just have to claim it and proclaim it.

So, like those first women, we tell our friends about an all-but-unbelievable event, and, like those first women, we usually do it with great hesitation and in incomplete sentences. We also proclaim Christ's Resurrection as we take our transformed selves into a world that is desperately longing for transformation and let our faith touch everything we touch – not only on Sundays, but on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Saturdays, too. And life is radically changed.

It is astonishing news that we proclaim; it is indeed all-but-unbelievable Good News. Christ is risen; there is always hope; and life is radically changed. And we aren't here to 'prove' the Resurrection; we're here to celebrate it!

Christ is risen!! Alleluia!!

The Rev. Nancy Miller