

Decision for Resurrected Lives

April 8, 2007

(Easter Day - Year C)

Luke 24: 1-10

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

Alleluia! Christ is risen.
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

{singing}

I'm dreaming, of a white Easter.....

Although the color that we use in church for the season of Easter is white,
Most of us did not plan on having a white Easter like this one.
Yet, whether it is warm and sunny outside or cold and snowy, the Easter message challenges us today to make a decision.

In the Easter Gospel from Luke that we just heard proclaimed, the first words that are spoken at the empty tomb are a challenge to each of us.

The first words that we hear are spoken by 2 men who stand by the empty tomb.

The 2 men in dazzling clothes do *not* say:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Instead, the first words spoken at the empty tomb are a question:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

The women at the tomb are asked a question.

And, today, we are asked the same question as well.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

For, today, at the empty tomb, you and I are asked to make a decision.

We can decide to keep on looking into the tomb, focused on the past, with no hope.

Or, we can decide to live a resurrected life, which is focused on the future.

A little over three years ago, my father in-law, Tommy, died suddenly. Tommy was in excellent physical condition. But, he came home from playing golf one day and collapsed in the living room, a victim of an aortic aneurysm. Tommy died shortly after arriving at the hospital. He was just a few days shy of celebrating his 70th birthday. And, Tommy and Rose Mary, my mother in-law, were just one month away from celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Tommy's death was a huge loss to our whole family, especially, of course, to my mother in-law, Rose Mary.

Rose Mary was then faced with a decision. She could decide to keep on looking into her husband's tomb, focused on the past, with no hope. Or, she could decide to live a resurrected life, which is focused on the future.

Rose Mary chose not to look for the living among the dead. But, she chose to live a resurrected life. Having appropriately walked the journey of grief, Having appropriately remembered the past, She made decisions that are a witness to the Resurrection from the dead.

She turned to her faith in the resurrection and joined a new church, where she started a new quilting class. She went on mission trips to Russia to minister to the new Christians in the post-Soviet era. She sold the house she shared with Tommy and bought a new patio home.

Our family went to visit Rose Mary in Kentucky this last month at spring break. And, her new life is a witness to the power of resurrection.

But, first, she made a decision. She made a decision to not look for the living among the dead.

She made a decision to not stay at the tomb.

She made a decision to go and tell the apostles and be a witness to the Resurrection.

For, we can sit here today in this church, and we can proclaim with our words that Christ is risen indeed.

But, unless you and I make a decision, today, to live changed and resurrected lives, then who really cares if some man named Jesus was raised from the dead 2,000 years ago?

For, the first words at the empty tomb were a question:
“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

This parish, this church that we call St. Alban’s Episcopal Church, has weathered some challenging years.

And, this church was then faced with a decision.

This church could decide to look into the tomb, focused on the past, with no hope.

Or, this church could decide to live a resurrected life, that is focused on the future.

St. Alban’s chose not to look for the living among the dead.

But, St. Alban’s chose to live a resurrected life.

And, the new life in this parish church is a witness to the power of the resurrection.

But, first, you made some decisions:

You turned to your faith in the resurrection.

You continued to sing in the choir, you continued to serve as an acolyte, to play the organ, to serve on the vestry and sweep the courtyard and bring homemade dishes to potluck lunches.

You decided to love and welcome and embrace every single person who walked through these doors.

St. Alban’s made a decision to not stay at the tomb, but to go and tell the apostles and be a witness to the Resurrection.

For, the first words at the empty tomb are not a statement, but a

question:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

Which begs the question:

Why do *you* still look for the living among the dead?

Maybe today is a day for *us* to make some decisions.

Some decisions to leave the tomb and stop looking for love in all the wrong places, but to return to the church, the faith community.

A decision to stop looking for fulfillment in the empty promises of consumerism and materialism.

A decision to leave the tombs of addiction and perfectionism.

For, the resurrection of Jesus Christ only became clear and real when the women left the tomb.

Then, the women went to share their personal experiences with the other apostles, with the others in the faith community.

And, it is *those resurrection stories* which are the living proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of this worship service, I led us in the Easter Acclamation.

I said:

“Alleluia. Christ is risen.”

And you responded:

“The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.”

That acclamation is based upon what we know about what happened 2,000 years ago.

But now, I want to invite you to make that Easter Acclamation current and personal:

If you have seen and experienced resurrection in this church, in this faith community, then I want you to be bold and shout out:

“Alleluia!”

“*Alleluia!*”

If you have seen and experienced resurrection in your own life, then I want you to be bold and to shout out:

“Alleluia!”

“*Alleluia!*”

Those Alleluias, my friends, are living proof that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is real.

Those Alleluias are based on real decisions to live resurrected lives.

For, at the empty tomb, on this white Easter Day, we are asked a question:

“Why do *you* look for the living among the dead?”

AMEN.

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