

Luke 24: 1-12 John 20:1-18

You probably know the feeling – you come running in, all out of breath, bursting with excitement about what you have just seen. Something incredible, something amazing has just made you think twice about everything you thought you knew. You pour out this amazing thing that just might have changed your life, just to have someone go - “...yeah.....well....whatever.” You feel disappointed, deflated, and hurt.

This is what Luke tells us happened when the women disciples returned to the men proclaiming, “Christ has risen!” To the men, it seemed like an ‘idle tale’ ...an ‘old housewife’s tale.’ “Nonsense” as the Common English Bible describes it. Either way, it must have left the women wondering why no one believed them.. (but then, it might have been because they were women..)

The story doesn’t stop there. Two thousand years, plus, we still proclaim the same truth; “Christ is risen. Risen indeed.” The Easter story in Luke’s gospel offers a clue about how this “Risen Christ” might affect our lives today.

On the road to Emmaus, two disciples are talking about how hope died when Jesus died. But, as they talk and remember God’s actions and promises from earlier days, it’s as if Jesus is walking right along with them. Maybe it’s as simple as realizing that no matter what road they travel, Jesus isn’t far away. In memory and teaching, the Risen Christ would be there. Always.

It’s the same with us, too. Easter happens, not just once a year, but moment to moment as we recognize the presence of Christ in our lives. But imagine no one believed the story of Easter. Mary understands it might have something to do with death defeated, but it seems Peter doesn’t. He has to run back to see. We are Peter.

Or, are we able to experience the Risen Christ present in our lives and our world, and know that Resurrection happened, even if we don’t understand how?

The Greek word for Tomb is “mnmeion.”

It has the same root word as ‘remember’....(vs. 6, 8)

*“Remember how he told you, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”
and then they remembered his words...”*

The tomb, a place of remembering the dead is now the women’s path back to life. They remember the words Jesus said when he talked about betrayal, death, and resurrection. The women hurry back to share the news of Easter.

If an apostle is “*one who affirms the Risen Christ,*”...then these women are the church’s first apostles. An idle tale? Was this because others weren’t sure of the women’s credibility? (not the first time) Or, maybe it was because of the incredible nature of the news they were sharing?

Mary Magdalene. She is sad and unbelieving this first day of the week; her hopes, once high, are crushed. John's gospel says she hasn't come to tend the body...only to grieve. We wonder how long she has been there, did she come at first light? What did she expect to find? We can pretty much assume she didn't expect to find the tomb empty. But once she saw the body of Jesus wasn't there, she went back to announce to the others what had happened.

In all four gospels, Jesus trusted this marvellous news, and responsibility, to a woman/women. This is remarkable considering the status of women in ancient communities. Mary Magdalene was a female apostle, overlooked for centuries. A silent, but powerful advocate for women. But men tended to think of her as only a messenger, not a 'real' apostle. On that first, dim Easter morning, when she stands, weeping beside the tomb asking, "Where have they taken the Lord?" the angel said, "He is not here." The power of God had been revealed to a woman. (No matter that Peter had to test the women's story by running to the tomb to see for himself.)

Why do we tell the story over and over, year after year? We don't do it to remember all the historical details, we do it because we want to gain new insights, and fresh perspectives, so we can remember who hard it is to look death in the face, and trust that Jesus is risen. What part of the Easter story do you remember, what gives you inspiration, makes you afraid, or that you trust the most? All of the gospels tell of the tomb being empty. Is this important to help us understand the story of Easter; the information that Jesus' body was not in the tomb? Is this proof of the Resurrection? What would Easter be like if the body was still in the tomb, but Jesus had, in fact, risen from the dead? How would we know? Would that make it easier, or harder, to understand resurrection? Because we are human God has to give us a visual image. The empty tomb is a reminder that Easter remains a mystery taken over, in the end, by faith.

Stones need to be rolled away. Fear still needs to be set aside. The community will gather to remember what raises hope, makes fear disappear and what causes us to believe.

Hallelujah!

Standing just outside the tomb, when Jesus says, "Mary," we know all we need to know. Christ is risen.

We pray; God, we think we come prepared for this day like the women, but are we really?
Are we prepared to hear what we have to do?
Are we ready to accept the Risen Christ?
Amen.