

March 27, 2016 – Easter Sunday
He Rose and We Will Too
Annette Hill Briggs
Luke 24:1-12

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

“Alleluia! Christ is Risen!”

“The Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia!”

I suppose in some greater, spiritual sense it's good for a Christian to attend a funeral in the middle of Holy Week. See a real coffin. Smell really pungent incense. Truth be told, the best part of that day for me was the drive there and back through Indiana farmland. Newly turned fields and nursing calves did more for my grief than the ancient liturgy that was combined, so oddly, with a Tony Bennett song.

Easter: the week for which preachers prepare most and study least, because the mechanics of resurrection are medically impossible. . . and, therefore, entirely mysterious. Taken wholly, entirely, unexceptionally, by faith alone.

No one saw Jesus rise. A few saw a tomb without a corpse, with some grave clothes laid aside. Scant are the details, even in Luke. Women found the empty tomb. An angel spoke to them. They told the men. The men thought they made it up – or were confused by grief. In any case, they didn't believe them. Peter wanted to. He wanted what the women said to be true – at least enough to go see for himself.

Some part of Peter also remembered what Jesus said. Not his brain. His brain told him the women were just being women – *So emotionallll allll the timmmme* Some

other part remembered – the part from whence come faith, and love, the part that really, really wanted it to be true. Peter saw for himself: the women were right. They had told the truth.

He. Also. Was. Amazed. Not believing . . . yet. But not doubting the story.

Easter – resurrection – happens halfway through Luke’s story. Part Two is the Risen Christ at work in the world through his church. Beginning in the very next verse, people do believe. . . as the scriptures and the bread are broken, as they take in both – seeing, tasting, believing and, lastly, knowing: He is Risen.

Which is exactly right. The whole story begins at Easter. Without the Risen Christ, preachers have nothing to preach, nothing to say that Brené Brown can’t say better. Without the Risen Christ, Church has nothing to do that a thousand social services can’t do better.

The Risen Christ calls us here; He is why we are here; He’s all we have to say and sing, all we have to hold on to when the ground gets yanked from beneath our feet. His is the power that holds the sun in place and spins the planets around it. His are thoughts that invented goats and jellyfish. His is the life in whom we fall asleep and wake up. He rose from death and we will too. We can no more understand it than a diamond understands a fence rail, and yet, we were made to believe it, made for faith, made to love and trust God as newborn with her mother.

Along with my friend dying last week, I’ve a second new sadness. Someone dear to me for years and years is leaving town, her marriage broken by her spouse’s betrayal – a stunning one, even as betrayals go. The same day I learned of it, I read these lines in a book: *“Don’t ever put your happiness in someone else’s hands. They’ll drop it. They’ll drop it every time.”*^[1]

Sometimes they drop it because they are selfish. And sometimes, simply because they are weak. Because we are weak. We want to help. We attempt more than we are capable of. We fail, we disappoint, and sometimes we even betray – betray the people we care for most.

But not God. God does not fail us. God does not reject us. God never betrays us. Everything we need of God is done in Christ Jesus. In His resurrection. That for which his followers hoped, we have! As Julia Cameron writes: *“Within me I carry God. Within God I am carried. There is no separation, Only the forgetting of the union.”*^[2]

And so, we feast. We eat from a common table; we raise our voices together in one song and mingle our money on a single plate; we act out this re-remembering with one another, and in turn the broken pieces of our selves are mended back together. Re-formed again and again and again, that we might carry on with life, this side of eternity. . . and in our hearts, from whence come the faith and the love and the trust with which to preach and do the gospel – which is ours and ours alone.

He rose . . . and we will too!

Would you pray with me?

[1] Christopher Barzak

[2] Julia Cameron, Blessings (New York: Penguin, 1998) p.78.