

Sermon for Easter Day 2025
An Idle Tale

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here, but has risen.
Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,
that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners,
and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”
Then they remembered his words,
and returning from the tomb,
they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.
Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James,
and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.
But these words seemed to them an idle tale,
and they did not believe them.*

I always appreciate it when we hear this account for Easter from the gospel of Luke.

Luke is the only one of the gospel writers to say that the women’s news of Jesus’ being raised sounded to the apostles like “an idle tale.”

First, I have to say . . . doesn’t that just sound like a bunch of men saying “there, there, ladies. You’re just a bit overwrought.”—

As if they were the 1st century version of real housewives of Galilee.

There is a bit of that kind of dismissal of the news because it came from the women—some of whom were even their own mother.

Yet if we are honest, many of us hear these joyful proclamations and think the same way as the male apostles.

What rubbish! This is delusion. It is a rumor. An idle tale.

We may even find it a bit comforting to realize that immediate reaction to the news of Christ’s resurrection was not believing, not even joyful, but perplexion, amazement and skepticism.

A wife’s tale. A rumor.

And, as I said, many of us here today have at some point questioned the truth of this story.

I heard someone say recently that daring to believe—as in trust—the Easter gospel is, perhaps the hardest thing Christians are asked to do. What kind of fools dare believe in God’s power to bring life out of death?

We know, of course, that those first disciples—both women and men—moved from their initial fear and skepticism to rejoicing and belief. It didn’t happen immediately.

But . . . as they remembered what Jesus had told them and then hearing and experiencing encounters with the risen Christ, they eventually see not just an empty tomb, but evidence that Christ is indeed alive.

They will see him, touch him, talk and eat with him.

And as they come to trust that Christ is risen, is still alive in this new way . . . their lives are changed.

They who were so afraid,
stand up against even the might of the Roman Empire to
preach the Gospel, care and heal the sick,
lift up the lowly,
and love and serve all God’s people.

They, who were so afraid, do these things without fear,
many at the cost of their own lives.

Now we may think those first disciples had an advantage over us.

They saw and touched the risen Christ.

They had that first hand, tangible, credible evidence.

But . . . what about us?

After all, we may still be at the “idle tale” of it all—thinking these stories are a bit like looking at pictures of and hearing about someone else’s summer vacation.

You know what that’s like, right?

Good for them, but . . . what about me?

Good for Jesus, but what about us?

What good is it to us if Jesus has been raised and we are not?

So I wonder if we have often come at this story
in a less than helpful way.

What if these stories were never intended to be just about Jesus?

What if this story is as much about what is happening to us as they are
about what happened to Jesus.

I don't know exactly what happened that first Easter day, but I have
come to believe that this story is less about explaining, understanding,
and making sense of what happened that day
and more about experiencing what that day means for you and me today.

So here are three things I think this story means for us.

First, it means a promise.

It promises a future.

And some wise person said, "the force of the future is to prevent the
present from closing in on us, from closing us up."

The promise means we can never say about our life, "This is it.
This is all there is." Or "This is how it will always be."

Our resurrected life in Christ is not a future event,
something yet to happen.

It is a present and everyday reality that promises us a future
and the chance that this moment will be transformed and changed.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Second, it means we have hope.

It means we have hope for our lives and the lives of those we love.

We have hope "for something absolutely new, a new birth"
a new life.

We have hope that our lives matter.

It means we have hope in the midst of our doubts and uncertainties,
despite the riskiness of life, and when nothing makes sense
and the odds are against us . . . this hope means that we live
with a "great perhaps" and openness to the future.

We hope against hope for the unexpected,
the possibility of the impossible.
Alleluia! Christ is risen.
Christ is risen indeed Alleluia!

Third, it means a call.
The resurrection is a calling on our lives.
And this call awaits our response.
We are being called to believe that love is stronger than evil,
life is stronger than death
and life is precious beyond belief.
We are being called to gratitude for the opportunities of every moment
given us and not waste or take for granted a single one.
We are being called to live more fully alive
and take the risk that there is always more life awaiting us even when it
is unimaginable, unforeseeable, and seemingly impossible.
The resurrection of Christ is calling us into life, more life, new life.
It is the love of God in Christ saying yes to us
and it asks us to answer, to act, to respond and take the “beautiful risk.”

Because people who trust by faith that the story always ends in life and
life abundantly can take the risk of living courageously
with acts of faith, hope, and love because we know
all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.
This is the reminder we need when we see the powers that be come at us
with injustice and violence, oppression, and war.
It changes the way we live in the face of such opposition
when we trust and have faith that Christ is risen.
Because the idle tales and rumors of grace, forgiveness and the
redemption of all things are true.
All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.
Alleluia! Christ is risen.
Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!