



ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

“WHAT IF?”:
EASTER DAY—9:15 SERVICE

ISAIAH 65:17-25
PSALM 118:1-2, 14-24
ACTS 10:34-43
JOHN 20:1-8

A SERMON BY THE REV. CAROLINE STACEY
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Perhaps you have seen the hilarious Youtube video of a 3 year old Scottish girl asking her Dad about some of our modern Easter traditions. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xgk6g-ovjM>) *What is the relationship between Jesus and the Easter bunny? Are the Easter bunny and Jesus best pals? Is the Easter bunny in the Bible?* (No, but the Easter bunny might be making an appearance later). *Bunnies don't lay eggs. Why does the Easter bunny give us chocolate eggs? Does Jesus just totally love chocolate then? What popular culture does with Easter is charming if a little odd. Personally I think God delights in all of it. God delights in our delight!*

Yet what we are about today is a more grown-up joy than the Easter bunny alone can bring. We celebrate the death of death. The women who go to the tomb obviously expect to find Jesus' body. They are confused and fearful when two messengers announce Jesus is risen. When the women tell the male disciples, they are not believed. "An idle tale", Luke says. Wishful thinking.

Then there is a gap. Something causes Peter to question himself. What if...? He runs back to the tomb. Suddenly this question becomes the most urgent thing in his life. What he discovers changes him forever.

Where does faith begin? For Peter, faith in the risen Jesus starts here, second-guessing himself. Peter's self-doubt is God's invitation. Peter's what if is the risen Jesus inviting him to *Come and see* for himself. For three years, Peter has had Jesus near, beside him, in the flesh. After Jesus dies, Peter is in the same boat as the rest of us. His faith really becomes *faith* this morning.

Where does faith begin for *us*? We can start with "what if"? like Peter, with questions. None of us can fully understand what happened at the Resurrection. Peter certainly didn't. The gospel writers don't either; the Resurrection itself isn't described by any of them. Complete understanding or certainty are not required for our spiritual journey.

A friend of mine says that when he is listening to someone's spiritual journey, he listens for the holes. The holes are those places where something life-changing happens to us that cannot be fully explained. Meeting our life partner and just knowing deep down that this is "the one". A chance invitation that we say Yes to that ends up taking us on a completely different life path. My friend calls these "God spots". This doesn't mean God micromanages our lives. It means that God is always present in our everyday lives, working through ordinary events to offer us greater joy and greater love. Sometimes, we almost accidentally say Yes. Sometimes we don't recognize that it is God's grace coming to us.

For me, the meaning of the Resurrection in our everyday life is that God's life is not separate from our life, it is always connected. God's love revealed so powerfully in the Resurrection of Jesus is the source of our capacity to love. When we find human love, we are connecting with God's infinite love in a way that we can understand and receive and delight in.

Resurrection is possible even in the dead places of our lives, where we have buried those things of which we are afraid or ashamed. Peter knows all about shame – denying Jesus three times. Peter knows all about fear – deserting Jesus in Jesus’ hour of greatest need. Yet the risen Jesus still seeks him out in loving forgiveness. What if our desolate tombs can be filled with light and healing instead of darkness and suffering? Jesus’ promise to us this morning is that those tombs can be opened and old wounds healed.

The truth is, our journey of faith can begin from anywhere. We think we seek God – and we do - but it is nothing compared to God’s search for us. God is always calling us to notice him. Everywhere. To see God in each other, in the beauty of Spring and the joy of children in the Easter bunny.

What the Resurrection of Jesus means is that there is more love in the world than we can even imagine and there always will be. God’s love is never defeated, even in death. We may be exhausted. We may be at the end of

our strength, but God is not. God is always pouring love and hope into the world through Creation, through the gift of each other, through the Resurrected Jesus. *Alleluia, Christ is Risen!*

AMEN

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