



April 17, 2022 – Easter Sunday
Meanwhile the Risen Jesus is Showing Up
The Reverend Nick Morris-Kliment
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Alleluia, Christ is Risen! *The Lord is Risen, indeed, Alleluia!*

We have an astounding story today. Some would say an unbelievable story. An earth-shattering story that has been repeated for nearly two thousand years. A breath-taking story that keeps drawing us back to our deepest hopes and yearnings for wholeness and strength. A powerful story that reminds us of the reality of a God who loves us more than we can stand or imagine, and who, appearances sometimes to the contrary, walks beside us in all our struggles and joys.

Meanwhile, day-to-day, we live our lives as if this sacred event had never occurred. The story of the empty tomb. It's in all four of the Gospels with slightly different details. This morning we hear it from the Gospel of Luke. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other unnamed women come to the Tomb expecting to find Jesus.

These women had followed him from Galilee all the way to Jerusalem over the course of three years, absorbing his teachings, witnessing his miraculous works, providing for his ministry through their resources. They had risked much. They were present at his execution and witnessed his burial in the tomb. After resting on the Sabbath according to the commandment, they now come to finish the necessary burial rituals.

But when they arrive at the tomb, they do not find the body. They scratch their heads, perplexed but not scared, until two men in dazzling clothes appear beside them and frighten them out of their wits. After they get over their shock, they have the presence of mind to listen to what the men have to say to them: “Why do look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen.”

The men remind them of what they already knew: they are “reminded to remember.” Jesus *had told them* that he would be crucified, and then rise again. After being reminded, the women don't need to be told twice to go make this news known.

They make their way back to the place where the disciples and other dispirited followers of Jesus were gathered in their grief.

Those waiting for them on this occasion, however, weren't exactly receptive to the news that the women brought.

Our rather tame translation that reads, “their words seemed to them an idle tale,” is based on a Greek phrase usually employed elsewhere in first century Greek to describe the ranting of someone in a delirium. (*Feasting on the Word*). Another scholar suggests that a reasonable translation into English of what the men thought of the women's report would be an earthy, colloquial word that begins with B and ends with T. (Anna Carter Florence, *Working Preacher*).



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All that is to say: the men thought the women were nuts and weren't buying their story.

And on the one hand, who can blame them? I imagine anyone of us might have responded in just the same way. And maybe we are thinking that right now. Their world has been shattered by the murder of their beloved leader. Of course, they are going to believe in the usual story of death. Dead people stay put. They don't evaporate into thin air. And on the other hand, they keenly feel the emptiness of Jesus' absence. When our worlds have fallen apart, it's not hard to feel that we, too, have been abandoned by our God. It feels like a void. We feel alone.

Meanwhile, in the story that immediately follows this one in the Luke's Gospel, it's apparent why Jesus is not in the tomb.

On that same day, the Risen Jesus, as-yet-unrecognized, is across town, walking west. He falls in beside a couple of broken-hearted disciples as they trudge their way toward Emmaus, about seven miles west of Jerusalem. As-yet-unrecognized Jesus strikes up a friendly conversation with his fellow travelers:

“What's up? What are you guys talking about?”

“What? You haven't heard?” And they tell him the sad story.

As-yet-unrecognized Jesus helps them to remember all that they had been told about God's promises, that the Messiah would be killed, buried, and rise again. Heartened by the presence of the as-yet-unrecognized Risen Jesus, they invite him to grab a quick bite to eat with them before he continues on with his journey. And when he breaks the bread, they recognize him.

Meanwhile, the women and Peter gathered just inside the walls of Jerusalem are scratching their heads at Jesus' absence.

In our own lives, it may seem that Jesus is absent; We keep searching for him; like a Where's Waldo picture, it can be hard to find him.

You've just realized your marriage is over. You've just learned that your child is very sick and needs immediate treatment. You've just come to the realization that you hate your job and don't see another good one on the horizon. We've been battered by a pandemic that has brought heartbreaking loss: millions dead worldwide, untold numbers of others with lingering, crippling symptoms; lost jobs and opportunities; cancelled graduations; postponed weddings and baptisms; disruptions of all kinds; exacerbation of existing inequalities; a world of anxiety and depression, especially among our young people, and now a brutal war that is having world-wide fallout...



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Meanwhile, though the marriage is over, you discover a depth of resilience that you didn't know you had. Friends and family remind you of your strength, and shower you with encouragement, love, and concrete help. *The Risen Jesus is showing up.*

Meanwhile, though the treatment for your child is long and the future uncertain, you are buoyed up by friends and neighbors and wise and skillful medical professionals, and the courage of your family. *The Risen Jesus is showing up.*

Meanwhile, though the job seems like a dead end, there is gratitude for the means to support your family in the meantime, and for the skills and talents you do get to offer, and for help from unexpected quarters. *The Risen Jesus is showing up.*

Meanwhile, though the pandemic has wrought misery of all sorts, we give thanks for the acts of loving kindness, heroism, generosity, mercy, dedication, courage, innovation and creativity, large and small, all around us. It's everywhere. He's everywhere!
The Risen Jesus is showing up.

You see, the Resurrection is the **meanwhile** of faith.

We can argue over the bodily resurrection of Jesus, what happened to his body. Nobody saw him leave. But all through our lives, because the Tomb is empty, we can know through the baptized eyes and heart of faith that the Risen Lord is present in the circumstances we face.

The eyes of faith are not blind to the brokenness of life; but they are they open to the **meanwhile** to which our hearts and minds attest. While we make our way through a life that is both hard and beautiful, both fragile and gorgeous, the Risen Lord is at work alongside us in the **meanwhile**.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

Amen.