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St. Luke's Episcopal Church ~ Anchorage, Kentucky
The Great Easter Vigil ~ March 26 & 27, 2016
Luke 24:1-12

On this festive, celebratory Easter Vigil Eve – we joyfully celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The new fire is a mighty symbol of His prevailing light and love that breaks the chains of darkness and death - offering us eternal life in Him! He is risen! Alleluia!

When the women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with the spices that they had prepared, we can only begin to try to imagine their shock when they saw that the large stone had been rolled away from the tomb, and that the body of their beloved Jesus was not on the tomb. Yet when approached by two men in dazzling garments (whom biblical scholars conjecture were angels) saying "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" they were also reminded of the words that Jesus had spoken to them in Galilee, and they remembered, they remembered, The women didn't ask questions, they did not doubt, they recalled and they believed, and they went quickly to share the joyous news with the apostles. And what was the response of the apostles? Disbelief – and to most of them, it was thought that the women were telling an "ide tale" Now, I cut the doubting apostles some slack, as they were surely weary and deeply saddened from the horrid events that had taken place just hours before. And to be fair, they didn't witness the two angels in 'dazzling clothes' at the tomb. But, Peter must have had an inkling of hope that the women's story was truth, and so he decided to go and see for himself. Upon finding the tomb empty, Peter was "amazed."

Now there is a stark difference between 'belief', which compelled the women to go quickly to share their testimony, and Luke's account narrative that illustrates - upon finding

the tomb empty, Peter was “amazed.” Yet there is no indication that this ‘amazement’ prompts Peter to take action in promulgating a new message... at least not at this juncture.

So I ask where are you in this story of the empty tomb? Are you amazed, or do you truly believe? I suppose we could experience a little bit of both, but it is how we choose to live our life that determines the deeper meaning of the resurrection and what it truly means for us, as believers in Jesus. We can go through all of the motions of living a spiritually ordered life, and this is a good thing. Our liturgical routine keeps us on a path of accuracy as we embrace living out our long-held Traditions. It's safe, it's relatively predictable, and hey – it's holy living! We can recognize the amazement of the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus and devote our lives to glorifying this wondrous event that we celebrate on this glorious evening with all of its grandeur, aesthetic beauty, and sacred liturgy and music! But...what about tomorrow? Dare we walk away as though nothing has changed? What about next week? What about a few months from now, when – well let's be honest– things tend to be a little more relaxed during the summer months.

The tomb was empty, people! Yes! Let's be amazed, but let's also believe – and I mean really believe, because when we TRULY believe and acknowledge the impenetrable truth of the empty tomb, “the world has got to be different, and we have got to be different, and we are therefore called to live differently!” In the words of our presiding bishop – Michael Curry – we are called to be crazy Christians! The world needs crazy Christians! To demonstrate what it means to be a crazy Christian I offer you this excerpt from Bishop Curry's Book called ‘Crazy Christians – A Call to Follow Jesus’ “We need some Christians who are as crazy as the Lord. Crazy enough to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God -- like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world from the

nightmare it often is into something close to the dream that God dreams for it. And for those who would follow him, those who would be his disciples, those who would live as and be the people of the Way? It might come as a shock, but they are called to craziness.”

Quite frankly when we think about it... it’s a bit crazy to believe that the tomb was empty, is it not. I would conjecture to say that there may be some of us that perhaps question this truth because it seems simply too good to be true. Yet, it is true, and He is risen! In the words of Rev. Pendleton Perry “The knowledge of the resurrection impels those who believe to walk the pathway of discipleship. To work. To risk. To challenge, to take up the cross, because the Christian knows that the cross –no matter how difficult it is to bear- will triumph over the God who empties the tomb, the God who rolls away the stone. We are threatened by the resurrection. The old life may not be gone just yet, but it will be. Our new life has begun.” Now this is a tall order and the thought of this profound living for Christ may be overwhelming, but we are not alone. We are not alone, as Christ is with us and He will enable us to walk with Him by faith. Is there any other way?

I grew up on the east coast of Florida..... We visited the beach regularly.... I would sit along the shore and enjoy the beauty, safely from a distance. But – oh – when I decided to finally swim in the ocean I experienced a sense of freedom and sheer joy. A beautiful analogy for this experience can be interpreted from a song that I recently heard on the radio. I had actually heard the song many times before, but on this particular occasion, I listened intently to the lyrics. The song is performed by the contemporary Christian band –Hillsong United, and it is called ‘Oceans - Where Feet may fail.’

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep
My faith will stand

And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand
Will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now

So I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Oh, Jesus, you're my God!