

*Easter Day Year*

*Lections: Acts 10:34-43; Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24; Col. 3:1-4; Matt. 28:1-10*

Jesus Christ *is* risen today, my friends, and that makes all the difference in the world. The Resurrection lies at the heart of our Christian faith, because without it, Jesus is just another martyred prophet; just another good man who tried to change his world and failed. As I said last week, Jesus's crucifixion—his brutal and violent death—was the price the deathly powers of empire demanded of this spiritual revolutionary.

Jesus was willing to go that far, all the way to a cross, to show us just how far God's love reaches. Yet, while some of his preaching and teaching is timeless and universally applicable, his central vision of a world turned upside-down, where the lost are found, the lowly raised up, victim and perpetrator justly reconciled, and where Love truly is the most powerful force in Creation, all that depends on a God who is able to overcome death itself and to prove it by raising Jesus from the dead.

Now, it must be said that of course, the Resurrection is an assault on our rationality. Dead people don't just come back to life. This isn't a new objection. Even 2000 years ago, many people relied on that logic to say that the first Christians were at best mistaken and at worst, outright lying, or even insane, to claim that Jesus's disciples saw him in a new body, heard his voice, touched his barely-healed wounds. And if you're coming this morning with some of those same doubts, you are welcome here. The genius of the Episcopal Church's liturgical calendar is that we get the next 7 weeks to look at, dissect, and explore from a variety of perspectives what this Resurrection thing is all about and what it means for our lives now.

But today, this Easter morning, we get to share in the astonishment of Mary Magdalene and the other disciple named Mary. Expecting to find only a lifeless body—the physical symbol of the trauma, fresh in their hearts, of all the loss, confusion, and deep grief of their last few days—these women nonetheless come out of deep love for the man they called teacher, rabbi, friend. And as they come, they witness miracle after miracle: a great earthquake, a fearsome angel, bright and shining, an empty tomb, reigniting their hope that maybe, just maybe, it wasn't the end for Jesus after all.

Perhaps all of that would have been enough to convince these faithful women that something beyond their wildest dreams had come true. While I can't say I've witnessed anything as dramatic as an earthquake or an angel descending from heaven, I can tell you that there have been unexpected and unlooked for signs in my life that God was up to something, bringing me closer to the abundant life Jesus promised: coming out as gay to my best childhood friend and being met with love instead of judgment; an acceptance letter to my dream college that was my ticket out of poverty; a first date that would eventually lead me back to church; a tingling down my spine as our bishop asked God to make me a priest in Her church.

And sure, you may be thinking, "But Isaac, those aren't *really* miracles. Lots of people, especially now, can "come out" and not be bullied. Lots of people get into college. And the rest could just be coincidences."

And you're right, they *could be* coincidences. And it could be that what the two Marys experienced was just that, coincidental events, exaggerated maybe, or even worse, made up.

But then, on the way to tell the other disciples, still hiding in fear and despair, Mary and Mary come face to face with the risen Jesus and their lives are changed forever. They become, as later tradition will name them, Apostles to the Apostles, the first people entrusted with a real encounter with the resurrected Christ, an encounter that will change the world.

My friends, I do not believe the Resurrection is real *just* because my family instilled that in me from a young age. I don't believe it's real *just* because we find it in Scripture. I believe, I trust, that Resurrection is real because I've seen its power in my own life, changing it for the better. I've seen Resurrection power at work as I survived a homophobic church and small town and now have found deep love and self-worth.

I've felt Resurrection power as beloved friends helped me pick up the pieces of a shattered dream of becoming a diplomat and make something new, leading me to this pulpit. I've known Resurrection power in the stories of our Christian heroes and saints, from my friends and family,

even from some of you right here, of overcoming impossible odds, of finding unexpected healing and wholeness after a tragedy, or simply just making it through another day.

Beloved, the Resurrection of Jesus is the source of our ultimate hope, that no matter what life throws at us, no matter the challenges we face, the ways we fall short, or the losses we bear, no matter the deep grief and terrible traumas we endure, and no matter the oppression we suffer or the justice we cannot find in this broken world—no matter what any of those powers of death have wrought in our lives, they are defeated, because today, death itself has been defeated. May that victory of Love over Death be the source and the aim of our profound joy and celebration this morning and all our days to come. Alleluia! Amen.