

4.17.22 –Easter Sunday

“Astonished!”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Romans 8:3-9 (NIV) ~ Pam

³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

L: These are Paul’s Words from God! C: Thanks be to God.

Luke 24:1-12 (NLT) ~ Pam

The empty tomb

¹ But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ³ So they went in, but they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes.

The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? ⁶ He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.”

⁸ Then they remembered that he had said this. ⁹ So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. ¹¹ But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it. ¹² However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.

L: These are Words of Wonder for the People of God! C: Thanks be to God.

Please pray with me:

Jesus, our Savior, be with us now as we try to understand both the horror of the cross, and the wonder of resurrection. Let us rejoice with Hallelujahs for your presence and your kingdom mission. So many this day are grieving losses from illness or war, and we pray for their comfort and your intervention. Let us remember

your words that because you are love incarnate, you rose from the dead in victory, and through you, we are saved from sin. Lord, in this familiar story, speak new meaning through your messenger. “**Amen.**”

 For those of you who could participate, thank you for spending Good Friday with us this year. And now, ***Happy Easter! Hallelujah! He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!*** We have already felt that joy in music and song, but it is our anchor for this season and bears repeating. Glad to be here in worship together in freedom, as we think about those Christians around the world celebrating this special day. Our hearts especially go out to Ukrainian Baptists who are praising God for life itself today, grieving lost loved ones, and praying for future safety and freedom.

For the experience of Holy Week and for our many blessings, we give thanks. After the week the Christ followers had had, it is no wonder they were sad, in despair, and a little frightened for their safety. Like the mothers and grandmothers left in Ukraine who have been burying their children, neighbors, and total strangers in between bombings, I imagine the women who loved Jesus felt compelled to risk everything too to respect his broken body by bringing the necessary spices to anoint him in the tomb. They weren't even sure how they would get into the tomb, but on faith, they went anyway to prepare their friend and Lord for heaven.

Once they arrived so early that morning, the women were ***astonished*** first to see the huge, heavy stone (weighing nearly 1-1/2 tons!) rolled away from the opening, and then to see that Jesus' body was not even there in the tomb. Based on the religious and political climate surrounding Jesus' death on the cross, anything could have happened: theft, desecration, or worse! On Thursday night, before the cross, Jesus had been praying in the garden, when Luke 23:53 tells us he asked the

approaching guards: “⁵³ Why didn’t you arrest me in the Temple? I was there every day. But **this** is your moment, the time when the **power of darkness reigns.**” So, the women were both perplexed and distressed at the empty tomb, so generously given by Joseph of Arimathea!

Then, they saw the two angelic men, and the women knelt in their luminescent presence. They spoke to the women: “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? ⁶ He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead!” It was only then that they recalled Jesus’ words that “the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of **sinful** men and be **crucified** but would **rise again on the third day.**” There are six resurrection predictions in Luke, yet the people were still astonished. Are we?

The women’s minds were then opened to remember those teachings. Before any of this had happened, after the Transfiguration and a public healing, Jesus had taken the disciples (including these women) through Galilee to a hidden place to talk and teach. According to Mark 9:30-32, there he said: “³¹ . . . The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.’ ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.” And from oral history, the prophet Hosea warned Israel’s pagan citizens rebelling against God: “Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the **third day he will restore us**, that we may live in his presence. (Hosea 6:1-2).”

How do you feel when you hear unsettling news, not necessarily unwelcome news, but information that you need to process and tell others? The adrenaline rush from both good and shocking news causes a

physical reaction of fight or flight. I imagine that is what happened to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James. They were so astonished by what they saw and did not see, that they had to let the others know! *With the telling*, they began to make sense of Jesus' teachings and warnings to prepare. *With the telling*, it sank in that life had new meaning for them and all believers! They were saved, and had the hope of resurrection, of seeing their Savior again in paradise. Peter, of course, was skeptical, and had to see for himself. He had just been caught in his own denial of knowing Christ, so he couldn't afford to do it again. These strong women stood fast in their faith and witness as they met with the disciples' disbelief.

Like any witness account with multiple observations, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John share the basic facts of Jesus' life and death but include different details in each. This does not make any of them wrong; they must be read together to get the whole picture. But for this year, I focused only on Luke's interpretation of events. Luke had an eye and ear for detail. Any differences in the accounts, however, do not weaken the strength of the Resurrection story. Even when the crucifier and persecutor of Christians, Saul, later Paul, met Jesus on the Damascus Road, he heard from the risen Christ that **Jesus is Lord!** There was no doubt about his sovereignty.

Paul's letter to the Romans that we read today had several purposes, but for this Resurrection Sunday, his words are another witness. He reminds the Roman church, struggling with dissension and idolatry, that man's sinful nature is hostile to God, like the one criminal next to Jesus on the cross—the one who was so rude and unrepentant. The other

criminal saw the purity in Jesus, and perhaps felt his spirit as the Son of God. He asked in repentance for salvation. Christ granted it to him. Paul is trying to persuade the Romans to see the difference between good and evil, and that is what we learn from Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday. We will continue to explore the persistent doubts and spiritual blindness of the disciples for the next few weeks as we encounter Christ's many appearances before he ascends to the Father.

When I read the words, "Why are you looking for one who's alive among the dead?" Paul's words from Romans 8:5-6 come back to mind: "5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." Which mind have you? Are we looking for those alive at the gravesite? We may honor them and their memories, and that is beautiful; but as Christian believers, we know they are already present with the Lord. They are not there! That should give us comfort to know that one day, we too will be resurrected and present with the Messiah. If you are not so sure about that or your soul's future, please set up a private time to talk with me. I don't have all the answers, but it is my vocation and great joy to walk with you through the questions, even the difficult ones. I invite you to know Jesus better. May we share this good news of Christ's love, sacrifice, and victory over death with others? **He is alive! He is Risen!** We have hope through Christ's intercession for our shortcomings. **Halleluiah!** "41 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever."

We will next have an instrumental response where you can reflect on the week's message for you personally and for our church, and then a congregational response in a favorite Easter hymn! Prepare yourselves to receive Christ with fresh understanding this year while listening for the new work he has for us to do. //

Will you pray with me? Father God, we are so grateful for your incarnate Son, Jesus—his presence with you from the beginning of time to his birth here on earth, to his teaching ministry, and even to his death on a cross. We thank you our salvation did not end there, but in the merciful Resurrection for our redemption. As we use new prayer tools, we ask you to touch our minds and lives in a way that assures us yet provokes us to share your story with others. Lord, even though we are astonished at your love and sacrifice, like these women and the other disciples, let us share this good news of resurrection with others who do not know you. Abide in us so that others see you through us. **Amen.**