

“Spacious Resurrection”

Luke 24:1-12 & 38-41a, Colossians 1:18-20, Ecclesiastes 3:11

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Prayer for Understanding God of Alleluias, empty tombs and good news reveal to us Easter. In the midst of, grief and heartache, violence and oppression, loss and separation, help us hear Easter, resurrection life and love that makes us want to dance and joy that enables us to run to empty tombs. Easter smells of fresh flowers and baked bread. Easter sounds like trumpets and laughter. Easter feels like a full table and a hug. With hope, a confident expectancy, that all forms of Easter are becoming reality, we listen. Amen

Grief, despair, sadness, and discouragement are temporary and terminal. Resurrection, hope, joy, and wonder are forever and eternal. Grief, despair, sadness, and discouragement are healthy responses to Jesus’ death, the state of the world, the painful struggle of earthy life, and are valid ways to enter worship on Easter. People watched Jesus’ betrayal, trial, beatings, and tortuous death. Jesus’ death was horrific and it seemed that all Jesus did, taught, and foretold died as well.

Easter begins with an acknowledgement of our grave situation. The world is a mess. We are plagued with fear, hate, and violence. We fail to be good neighbors to everyone. We tend to force our views upon others instead of being curious listeners. We struggle to find a rhythm of rest and growth. We silence voices and ignore the goodness in others. Our physical bodies hurt, deteriorate, and die. We are oblivious to much of the joy God pours into the cosmos. We lament the many ways that life is hard, uncertain, and broken. We resist sharing, creating disharmony, oppression, and conflict. We fail to love everyone, love ourselves, and love God completely. We are entombed, by shame, regret, and guilt. Some days, it seems like we are buried in a dark, cramped vault, constrained, restricted, and limited. Some days, it seems that we have only poor options, that glorious life is blocked by an immovable boulder. In this silence acknowledge your grief, despair, sadness, and discouragement. *Silence*

In the wake of death, the women were propelled to journey on by familiar rituals, preparing spices to anoint the body. We still have rituals that when death and loss happen propel us to journey on. My personal ritual is walking in the woods. Some disciples were paralyzed by grief. Some disciples appalled by the many forms of death hunkered down in locked rooms. Some were in denial. The good news is spacious resurrection is for everyone: for those journeying through grief with rituals, for those paralyzed, for those hunkered down, for those trying to live life, for those who are violent crucifiers. The good news of spacious resurrection is your story and everyone’s story.

The Easter account according to Luke: **Luke 24:1-12 NLT “Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. So they went in, but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 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? Jesus is not here! Jesus is risen from the dead! Remember what Jesus told you back in Galilee, 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.” Then they remembered that Jesus had said this. So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they did not believe it. However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, Peter peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then Peter went home again, wondering what had happened.”**

The resurrected Jesus met people in a variety of ways. The resurrected Jesus walked with people, shared a meal with people, went fishing with people, and met people everywhere. The gospel of Luke documents one of the resurrected Jesus’ Easter transformations as follows: **Luke 24:38-41a NLT “Why are you frightened?” Jesus asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it is really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts do not have bodies, as you see that I do.” As Jesus spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder.”**

Spacious resurrection permeated them through remembering and wondering. We are all on a journey to spacious, glorious, joyful, love. God created a spectacular garden for us to enjoy but we reject God, vandalize the garden, and flee from the garden. Easter invites us home to play in God’s spacious garden.

“In the Direction of Hope”

a poem by Sarah Speed

“I am on my way. Wait for me in the garden; I will be there soon. I am not the fastest runner, Lord knows that, but these legs are moving. I suppose I could blame my weary spirit for the slow speed. I could blame the grief I have shoved into my pockets and laid around my neck. I could blame my own hesitation to hope, a hesitation that clings like mud. But I do not know that Jesus cares about my speed. So tell God when you see them— I am on my way. Wait for me in the garden. I will be there soon.”

Spacious resurrection permeates us through remembering and wondering. Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan where every stranger is becoming a neighbor through compassion and caring. Remember how Jesus made space for Martha’s gracious hospitality, Mary’s curious learning, and every way one connects with God. Remember God our Good Gardener celebrating each of us regardless of one’s productivity and nurturing everyone. Remember God our Good Shepherd who is always with us and God is making sure that all of us will be fully found, welcomed home, and aware of our unique belonging to God’s family. Remember God’s spacious grace for Zacchaeus and everyone, more than spacious enough for everyone to perceive the goodness in everyone and to enjoy meals, fellowship and laughter together. Remember how God, on Palm Sunday, made space for every good and loving voice to be understood. Remember how Jesus healed everyone of anything that diminished life and celebrated, enhanced, and expanded all that enhances life.

Scripture proclaims: **Colossians 1:18-20 MSG “Jesus was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—Jesus is supreme in the end. From beginning to end Jesus is there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is Jesus, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in Jesus without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies.”**

The women were terrified. The angels told them to remember. Good memories cause the ember of hope to flare into reviving fire. The spark of the women’s account gave Peter just enough hope to get up, run to the tomb, and seek more. Sometimes grief, despair, sadness, and discouragement are a thick cloak that completely obscures one’s perception of spacious resurrection. This cloak caused some of the disciples to lament, “this is nonsense.” Whether you can perceive Easter, or not, spacious resurrection is all around us and spacious resurrection is in us.

Pastor Jeff Chu said: “The other apostles’ incredulity feels so relatable to me, especially in the context of our contemporary lives. In a world beset by so much sorrow, so much suffering, and so much heartbreak, a glimmer of good news can have such a hard time breaking my gloom. A glimpse of beauty, a flash of loveliness, can feel like foolishness amidst so much bad news. With memory, testimony, and time, we can recognize that grief is liminal, not terminal. And grief need not crowd out that we have loved and been loved. That we are not alone. That there is still hope in the land of the living.”

Ecclesiastes, the book of wisdom, explains how God has designed us eternal. Our life consists of a myriad of seasons, in every season we gather every goodness, love, and joy which God resurrects so all can celebrate every goodness for eternity. Ecclesiastes states: **Ecclesiastes 3:11 “God has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.”**

Scripture declares, “Love endures forever!” over and over again, “Love endures forever!” Say it with me, “love endures forever!” Whenever you struggle, remember “Love endures forever!”

Spacious resurrection permeates us through remembering and wondering. Easter is God creating spaciousness everywhere. You are invited to be curious, to wonder about God’s spacious resurrection. Death, the tomb, could not restrict Jesus. Jesus burst free with glorious resurrection life. God is creating space for the goodness Jesus revealed, modeled, taught, lived, and much, much more. Easter is resurrection eternal life for much more than for Jesus and more than resurrection eternal life for each of us. Easter is resurrection of all the goodness Jesus taught and modeled. God overcoming every form of death proclaims that there are no boundaries to God’s love. Allow the empty tomb to quiet your negative assumptions. Allow resurrection life to invite you into infinite glorious adventures. God is with you always, even though most of the time, most of us, cannot perceive God. God is loving you, and the cosmos, into splendid eternal life.

A tomb, once viewed as an ending, is becoming a beginning. A tomb once a place of grief, despair, sadness, and discouragement is becoming a manifestation of resurrection, hope, joy, and wonder. A tomb bears witness that God is transforming death into life. The resurrection tells us that nothing is beyond God’s power to redeem. Easter calls us to be people of hope. Easter invites us to join Jesus in being light, light that shines in the darkness, light that will never be overcome by darkness. Easter invites us to perceive the world through a resurrection lens that wonders how all is becoming glorious.

Wonder about God's spacious resurrection. Wonder about how all your goodness will be noticed and celebrated by everyone for eternity. Wonder about how all your good hopes will be fulfilled beyond your grandest imagination. Wonder about all people, all goodness, all joy, all love, being resurrected and expanding forever. Wonder about living in complete joy, abundant living, and being fully alive. Wonder about being free of the dull, restrictive clay shell, our restraining physical body to soar, shine, dance, and grow in joyful love forever. Wonder about God's amazing grace, washing away every imperfection and perfecting, enhancing and glorifying every goodness in us and in the cosmos. Wonder about all people living together in harmony, every relationship magnifying love, every uniqueness of each person expanding our perception of God. Wonder how traveling through the portal of death is like being a newborn baby with abundant opportunities. Wonder about music, art, flowers, and the beauty of the cosmos that give us glimpses of the coming glory of spacious resurrection. Wonder about how all that diminishes life will be changed into goodness. Wonder how God never gives up on anyone, or anything, rather God's love transforms all into spectacular majesty. Wonder how God's healing love will wipe away every tear. Wonder how living water will flow everywhere and nourishment will satisfy. Wonder how trees will clap their branches, mountains will breakdance, and leaves will heal all. Wonder how a gentle rain fills one with peace. Wonder how joyful memories will create laughter for eternity. Wonder about the mystery of Easter, let Easter thoughts disperse every one of your dark thoughts. Wonder about the mystery of Easter, let the joy of Easter embrace you and make your heart, soul, mind and essence whole. Wonder about a magnificent sunrise revealing an empty tomb and the resurrected Jesus loving everywhere.

In this silence remember and wonder about spacious resurrection. *Silence* Easter invites us to remember goodness and wonder about spacious resurrection. Amen