

"Ta-Da"

Colossians 3:1-4 & Matthew 28:1-10

March 23, 2008 - Easter Sunday

I heard of a Sunday School teacher who had just finished telling her third graders about how Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb with a great stone sealing off the only way in or out. Then, wanting to share the excitement of the resurrection, and the surprise of Easter morning, she asked: "And what do you think were Jesus' first words when he came bursting out of that tomb alive." A hand shot up into the air from the rear of the classroom. It belonged to

a most excited little girl. Leaping out of her chair she shouted out excitedly, "I know, I know, I know." "Good," said the teacher, "Tell us." Extending her arms high in the air she sang out: "TA - DA!"

The Easter proclamation is incredible. It is a word of hope that flies in the face everything that we believe to be true. Death is a total and invincible enemy. And yet, there He is - arms outstretched, breathing deeply of the fresh morning air, ready to go into locked rooms with nail pierced hands and sword pierced side ready to say, "Ta Da!" And in fact, even better - He says, "Do not be afraid!"

I am always amazed by the Easter Gospel texts. The one that we heard this morning from Matthew 28 has two women going early in the morning to the tomb. After they arrive and are standing looking at the tomb there is an earth quake. It frightened both the women and the soldiers that were still standing guard at the tomb. But it was only the beginning of the excitement. I don't know if you caught it or not but it is then, as soldiers and the two Mary's watched that an angel comes and rolls away the stone to reveal the empty tomb. With the stone still in place and soldiers watching Jesus had left the grave - - - "Ta Da" - 'Look kids, nothing inside! How silly to stand guarding an empty grave!' So get going. Go and spread the good news. Go and you will see Jesus elsewhere!

What are the first words of Jesus after the resurrection. Even though there are many contradiction in the reports concerning the events that took place, among the first words reported in almost every case are, "Do not be afraid!"

And yet we are. We live lives filled with all kinds of fears.

Martin Luther once spent three days in a black depression over something that had gone wrong. On the third day his wife came downstairs dressed in mourning clothes. "Who's dead?" he asked her. "God," she replied. Luther rebuked her, saying, "What do you mean, God is dead? God cannot die." "Well," she replied, "the way you've been acting I was sure He had!"

Someone once asked the question, "If Christ is alive, why aren't we more alive?" It seems to me that such a question is really at the heart of Easter. If the resurrection of Christ doesn't change anything in our lives, what is the big deal? If the resurrection of Christ doesn't change our whole world, then somehow we have missed the point.

Romans 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ rose from the dead by the power of God. Can we too live with some of the power of God visible in us? I ran across the following poem written by [Annie Johnson Flint](#) that says:

**Some of us stay at the cross,
some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and raised with Christ
yet lingering still in the gloom.
Some of us 'bide at the Passover feast
with Pentecost all unknown,
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly place
that our Lord has made His own.
If the Christ who died had stopped at the cross,
His work would have been incomplete.
If the Christ who was buried had stayed in the tomb,
He would have only known defeat,**

**But the way of the cross never stops at the cross
and the way of the tomb leads on
To victorious grace in the heavenly place
where the risen Lord has gone.**

How often do we just stand at the tomb looking at the rock? How often does our life reflect such gloom and fear that people closest to us have to imagine that God must have died? How often in this extraordinary time in history do we simply live in such fear that it is as if we can see nothing beyond the particular cross that we bear. Our crosses come in many shapes and sizes - each is individual. And it would be easy for us to get stuck looking at our cross and seeing only a tomb in the future.

But that rugged cross of Christ was transformed by the empty tomb. A symbol of suffering and death has been transformed into a symbol of life and hope. Oh, how God longs for you to be able to see beyond the cross that you bear - to see it transformed by the power of God. We all go through so much in this world - but with a life giving God, we do go through it - beyond the cross and through the hard rock over the entrance of the tomb - God has the power to take us through it all and bring us to life again. Why do we insist on sitting looking at the tomb when we are invited to go and live?

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Christ is risen! He is Risen indeed!

AMEN