

**Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church**  
**Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena**

**The Resurrection of the Lord/Easter Day**  
**April 4, 2010**

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

<sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; <sup>22</sup>for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Luke 24:1-11

<sup>1</sup>But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in, they did not find the body. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup>The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. <sup>6</sup>Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." <sup>8</sup>Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup>and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup>But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

**"The Telling Tale"**

**Luke 24:5 "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."**

**Luke 24:11 "But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."**

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**My first car was a 1972 Chevy Nova with one of those big block engines. It was still in the days before all the accessories and so it was all power. It had that deep growl to the engine. It was blue with a dark interior.**

**Yes, that was my first car. Sounds like one of those great old muscle cars. It does indeed, except for the fact that I did not own it in 1972. I got it in 1983 after my grandmother had driven it for 11 years. And it was not the hot 2 door coupe muscle car but was the 4 door “grandma” sedan. It came to me complete with its 1972 vintage clear plastic seat covers too.**

**While it was not the muscle car, it had the muscle car engine. Power! That Nova had power to spare—too bad it did not have power steering. No power steering and no sitting still. That piece of machinery was built to move. No matter how much adjusting was done to that carburetor, still the car did not idle well. It was built to move and go.**

**When I would come to a stop in the car I would have to lightly play on the gas pedal to keep the thing going. It was either go or nothing. That big ole engine on that little old lady car wanted to move. It wanted to be in the race...not that I ever raced it. Well, not much.**

**I better stop there. That is not why I’m telling you about that car. I’m telling you about it because of the issue that there was with the idle. It did not idle well at all; there was no standing still for this car—it wanted to be on the go. It maybe even wanted to be in the race—plastic seat covers and all!**

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**It is an idle of a different ilk. Not a standing still muscle car idle, but an idle tale. An unbelievable story, event, happening... The perspective in Luke’s-“it seemed an idle tale”-Gospel is this is just too weird for words.**

**This is the Gospel of Luke, so things are a bit different in his telling of story. There is no Mary encountering the gardener only to find out it is Jesus. Indeed, in Luke’s telling of the story there is no encounter with Jesus at all until those on the road to Emmaus that evening encounter him and they do not recognize him at all until they have invited him in to supper. When the stranger among them breaks the bread—then they get it and they recognize that it is Jesus alive.**

**On that morning—those women go to the tomb armed with their spices ready to do their duty only to find the tomb with the stone rolled back. When they go in they do not find a body of Jesus, instead they realize that are two men in dazzling appearance alongside them. These two angelic messengers ask them the question: “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen just as he said.”**

**He may have said it, but it was just too weird of a story—“it seemed to them and idle tale.” Unbelievable.**

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***“According to Luke, when our Risen Savior was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and their eyes were opened and they recognized him. This is the Lord’s Table, our Savior invites those who trust in him to share this feast. It is a feast that he has prepared.”***

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**Thirty years ago we spent time trying to prove the resurrection. I remember listening to Easter Day sermons, and even preaching them too, where the point was to somehow prove the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a Palestinian Jew, the Christ of God. The most compelling of those proofs was the fact that clearly something incredible happened in order to go from Friday to new dawn. In order to go from death and**

scattered disciples to a group that built a church movement that changed the face of all history—oh, something had to have happened there that day in the garden whether there was a gardener, a single angel, or two dazzling men in holy array. Something happened.

Indeed resurrection. Jesus alive. Most certainly. So we talked about proof and often tried to move through elaborate and well reasoned doctrine. In confirmation class we taught the Johannine perspective of Christ the Lamb of God. Christ the perfect sinless Lamb of God who becomes Isaiah's Suffering Servant. The Perfect One who takes on the sins of all humanity and suffers on humanity's behalf. *The Doctrine of Substitutionary Atonement*.

Oh, that is well and good—but there is more to this story. There is more here than doctrine and proof of bodily raised from the dead.

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See now, it goes back a little ways—it goes back to that last night before it all happened. What did he do? It is at that table in that Upper Room. Jesus does not merely talk about and describe bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood. Rather, he has all twelve of them—even Judas—actually partake of the food and the drink. They participate in the bread as body and wine as blood. It has a far reaching effect.

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But let me tell you another tale—another story of something that happened. It was an off the wall idea of mine. I was serving on the search committee that was looking for an Executive Presbyter for the Presbytery of Baltimore. We were down to our final candidates and were trying to decide about questions to ask them.

I wanted to do something a bit more creative. And we did. We gave those candidates a set of children's blocks of various shapes and sizes. Then we said to the candidate, "Now take those blocks, those resources, and build church." "Build church" was the instruction. From wooden children's blocks. One candidate, Peter Nord, who we eventually called immediately got busy with the blocks.

He took the blocks and started handing each person around the table a bit of blocks and then he invited us all to participate. What I recall is that we all were manipulating and maneuvering and connecting and attaching blocks as we built and created. All of us—everyone was involved. It became a lived—ah, a living exercise.

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Yes, that is what happened there at the table. When he took the bread and then when he lifted that cup. When Jesus did not stop there but gave them the bread to eat and wine to drink—when he invited them into participation it became a lived—ah, a living exercise.

Those women that morning on the first day of the week that encounter the two men in dazzling appearance, they were not "jonnie come lately" in the story. These were women who were with Jesus and the twelve. They traveled with the entourage. They had seen Jesus. They had heard Jesus. So they, along with the other disciples, would have heard Jesus when he said it. And he said it plenty.

*"The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of sinners. He will be mocked and beaten and die. And on the third day he will rise again."*

They had heard. But that morning when they made their way it just seemed too hard to believe—an "idle tale" as Luke puts it. I can almost see them, just a bit freaked out by the dazzling messengers. They walked

away scratching their heads, looking at each other in disbelief, and asking each other: “now what was that all about.”

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Luke 24:5 “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

Luke 24:11 “But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”

*“The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of sinners. He will be mocked and beaten and die. And on the third day he will rise again.”*

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It was not that they could not remember or that they refused to believe. It was that this was happening to them. They were caught in the in-between of “did that really just happen?” and “whoa, that just happened.” It was the reality that they were not watching this on television or reading this as a drama—this was their life. This was happening to them.

And so when we read the gospel accounts we have in one Mary both Marys. We have the Mary here in Luke’s gospel for whom this is too weird for words—how could it possibly be? And then in John’s gospel we have the same Mary, but this one when the one whom she supposes to be the gardener calls her by name she gets it that it is Jesus alive.

It is the same Mary.

We are that Mary. We have those moments when we just get it and it is all clear and we are there and we are in—our faith is vibrant and alive keen and clear. And then at almost the same moment we have that head-

scratching deep “huh” in our lives that wonders if anything is out there and real. We are all of that – fearfully and wonderfully made.

...he did not just tell them about bread as body and wine as blood—he invited them to eat and drink in order to participate.

...he invites us to the table and he invites us to participate in this life—this crucified and resurrected life. There is no escaping despair and struggle and death—we know that as we participate in it—it is part and parcel of our lives. And this resurrected life is too—we can use that same description—“there is no escaping it.”

As we participate in life—as we are in there—resurrection is there. It is not about proving it doctrinally defining it—it is about participating in it.

It is like those blocks in that exercise—we were not observers—we were participates. As we built and connected and played too—it came together—it lived.

This is not 2,000 year old history. We are not here to analyze the story and try to figure out what Mary really did that day.

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We are to live this story. We are Mary. We are to scratch our heads in wonder. We are to fall down and believe. We are to hear this as an idle tale that just seems too weird for words, and....and, and, and we are to witness—to tell about and live this life that cannot be stopped. That God in all God’s glory has the final word and death is not the final word—life is.

*“But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.”*

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**It is like that old Chevy Nova of mine—oh it was powerful. But standing still, in the idle position it was not much. But when it was moving—it could go. It was built to participate.**

**This resurrection life is what we were built to do. Sometimes we get it, sometimes we don't—sometimes we are all the way in—sometimes it feels more like we are in idle. But when we are moving—when we are moving into this life—oh, then it lives.**

**When we participate fully in the life that God invites us into then the telling tale is that we move forward roaring into this life with a vigor that has this far reaching effect. Oh yes, this far reaching effect—resurrection.**

**The telling tale is will we—will we close ourselves off and idle or will we open it up and race? Open it up and go—A-L-I-V-E!! Amen.**