

Easter Sunday

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### **Discovering Resurrection within Us**

Alleluia Christ is Risen, the Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

When I was a little girl I used to wait with great excitement each year for the television broadcast of my favorite story, *The Wizard of Oz*. This timeless tale appeals to both adults and children, with fanciful scenes to delight the young at heart and engaging characters who captivate us. The plot, deceptively simple, is filled with nuanced meaning. And when my children watched it years later, I saw new things as I viewed it through adult eyes.

The tale of a little girl's journey to get back home was filled with life lessons about what we value, good and evil, and the path to self-discovery. Ironically, the characters who journeyed to Oz, searched for the very attribute they already possessed. No one was more ingenious than the scarecrow, as compassionate as the tinman, or as brave as the lion, but they had to discover it for themselves. Once they claimed the truth, we witnessed their transformation. Ultimately their love for one another proved to be all they needed.

In our Christian narrative, we wait each year with great anticipation, to hear the story of the resurrection. We spend forty long days in Lent and are ready for the good news! The church is filled with light and flowers, the music and alleluias abound. "Christ is risen!" we announce, and the celebration begins. But let's not rush to the party just yet, or we risk missing the subtle complexities of this narrative waiting to be revealed.

John's gospel begins the story with the words, "while it was still dark." The author uses imagery of darkness to indicate a lack of understanding that pervades this narrative. As the story unfolds and the characters begin to comprehend what an empty tomb means, the scene moves from darkness to light. Bereft and hopeless, Mary Magdalene found the barren grave and was grief-stricken, believing that someone had stolen her Lord's body. When the disciples saw the grave clothes on the rock where Jesus' body had been laid, they returned home without any answers. It was not until Jesus called Mary by name that she recognized the love in his voice. Only then could she proclaim, "I have seen the Lord!" Each of Jesus' followers would experience a personal encounter with the Risen Christ before they could grasp what it all meant. Ironically, the very one they sought was right in front of them but they had to discover it for themselves.

We come to this Easter morning from diverse paths and perspectives. Like Mary, many of us are searching for Jesus in our own time. Our journey with Christ unfolds gradually and mirrors the pattern of this ancient narrative, life, death, resurrection, hope. It is a simple plot, but filled with nuanced meaning. We must discover for ourselves the implications of an empty tomb.

In our skeptical world, a barren grave proves nothing, promises nothing. We can walk away from this place unaffected, unmoved, still looking for life among the dead places in our hearts. But Jesus calls each of us by name to move away the stone from our own graves and to bring us new life. I wonder how often we have had an encounter with the Risen Christ right before our very eyes without recognition.

The other day I was on the subway and I looked around the train filled with people plugged in, tuned out, disconnected from one another. It is so easy to feel alone even in the midst of a crowd. Mounting fear and suspicion of each other fracture our relationships, divide our communities, and add to a sense of isolation. This is not the way the world is supposed to be. Jesus has shown us the way. Love of God and one another is all we need, but it means tearing down walls that protect us. Losing to find, emptying to be filled, dying to be reborn, Jesus has shown us the way.

In the light of resurrection, hurts can be healed, wrongs can be forgiven and brokenness can lead to new life. If we are to see our story anew, we must look for resurrection amidst ruin, and look for love in the face of hatred. If the shape of our lives claims that we have seen the risen Lord we bring hope to those who are trying to find their way home. Who knows, we might be the Christ right before their very eyes.

On this Easter day recall the pattern of your spiritual path, life, death, resurrection, hope. Our journey as Christians is to search for signs of Christ's presence and trust that the story is revealed to us as we are ready to receive it. I pray we will discover for ourselves that we have within us the very thing we seek, the Eternal Christ, creating us anew, enabling us to live resurrection lives. When we claim that truth, our Easter has come. Alleluia Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.