

Easter Day

April 1, 2018

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Anything is Possible

Alleluia! Christ is RISEN! Sing with me: Happy, happy, joy, joy, happy, happy, joy! (2x) The most wonderful day of the year does not come during what we call the most wonderful time of the year—it is today! Rejoice, for He is Risen!

How did we get here? How did we get to this glorious day of celebration? If you joined us this week for services, you walked through Jesus' last day with the disciples, walked past the cross where He was crucified. Walked with Mary and the other women who came expecting to anoint the body of a man in whom they placed their hope, you might better understand how we got here.

The Gospel says, "Do not be alarmed..." and, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Well, clearly, they told someone! Alarmed is an intense emotion, and combined with terror, and amazement, it makes for an overwhelming experience to say the least. These women needed some processing time. They needed to wrap their minds around what they saw and heard before they could begin to describe it. We experience many things in this life that are difficult to explain, and even tougher to describe—but that does not mean they are not real, or that they never happened. *He is RISEN!* For over 2000 years we have marked, remembered, and celebrated the impossible. My theology professor Dr. Walter Eversly, always said, "*Just because something has never happened before, it does not make it impossible!*" Our celebration today is no exception.

We are here together, but each of us had to arrive at this day following our own path, searching for Jesus in our own time, discovering for ourselves the implications of an empty tomb on our lives. Today we share impossible news, un-provable Easter news. History tells us that Jesus did die, and His disciples and millions of people over centuries, hold fast to the claim that He rose from the dead; that He was the Son of God who opened the door for all of us to eternal life; who gave us the command to love one another. We may not satisfy all people with proof of the resurrection, but the proof of the resurrection, I believe, is within all of us. Lack of proof does not mean that the resurrection is not real – there are many things in this world that are real, that we cannot prove. Imagination, intuition, emotions, and thoughts – all of these exist and are real. God continues to create and humankind continues to prove that "*Just because something has never happened before, it does not make it impossible!*" Humans have achieved many things once thought impossible; flight, submarines, space exploration, medical advances, the Cubs winning a world series—imagine what is possible with God!

All too often, I think we build our lives on a foundation of what is not possible. We listen more to people, and we follow social norms instead of listening to the small still voice within, and following our hearts. I am sure the voices of "reason" that influenced my life choices were similar to your own, only the messages were customized for each of us. Messages like: *Are you*

sure you want to go to school for that? Isn't that hard? Where will you get the money? You cannot get in there unless you know somebody, who would sponsor you? You are not enough...tall enough to play basketball, pretty enough to model, thin enough, smart enough, big enough, suited for that kind of challenge. Who is? We all are—we are all suited for any kind of challenge, because with God, all things are possible.

This day, the resurrection tears down our foundations of impossibilities, and builds a new foundation of hope. Jesus chose us, He knows our names, and calls us all to roll away the stones in our lives, and find hope. An empty tomb means that wherever you go, Jesus goes before you always. Nadia Bolz-Webber put it this way, *“(It's about) Today is about how God continues to reach into the graves we dig for ourselves, and pulls us out, giving us new life, in ways both dramatic and small.”* The voice within you knows your name, listen to it and follow your heart, celebrate! *“Hear the sound of exultation and victory. Make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines...”* The Lord GOD has wiped away the tears from our faces, and our disgrace has been taken away.

We have a huge advantage over the women who came to the empty tomb. We do not *live in a world in which death was the ultimate end of someone...when death meant permanent destruction and total loss to those left behind. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus changed everything!* We are living in an enlightened age. We are living with hope and the Kingdom of God awaits us. The news we share today is “impossible news.” Turn a deaf ear to those who focus only on “impossibilities,” and live into the wonder of the possibilities life in Christ offers us. I believe that there is more to be discovered and created in the world. With God, we can achieve the full potential that the universe has yet to unfold—I have faith.

On Thursday, during supper with the disciples Jesus gave us a single commandment: Love one another. As Brandon affirmed in his sermon, “Love...it is just that simple.” “God is Love.” God is love, He is Risen, and now it is up to us to carry that message to the world by loving each other.

There is one person who is a particularly good example of how to love others. Fred Rogers wanted to make a TV show for kids. Impossible, is what most producers of the day told him. But, he had a singular vision of love and kindness. For Mr. Rogers, love was at the root of everything. Fred Rogers said, *“All learning is love, love is at the root of all relationships—love, or the lack of it. The greatest thing we can do is to help somebody know that they are loved and capable of loving.”* He was a balm of kindness and empathy, and when I watch him I can see Christ shine through him.

We do find Christ in each other, and I wonder how many times I have encountered Christ through others, but failed to recognize Him. How many times did I let the world block me from seeing Jesus in others? Do you wonder this too? If we follow the command to love on another, then we look at each other through the lens of love—that is when we experience Christ. That is when our hope is renewed. That is when the Spirit cannot contain the proclamation, He is RISEN! There is light and hope in the world, and Jesus has chosen us to be His people.

I have recently been reading a book by comedian and author Trevor Noah, the host of the *Daily Show*. In his book Trevor speaks eloquently about relationships. One quote that stuck with me as I wrote this sermon was, “Being chosen is the greatest gift you can give to another human being.” (2x) Jesus chose us. Jesus knows us by name. Now we are called to choose each other,

because we show that we are Christians, through our love for each other, just as Jesus bid us to do.

He is RISEN! Jesus is the one for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation. Finally, in a world where everything is possible, and you can be anything you want to be; be loving, be kind. Happy Easter! Amen.

Inspired by The Rev. Liz Tomlinson, Nadia Bolz-Webber, Mr. Rodgers, Trevor Noah, Some commentaries and a mess of stuff I read and looked at online.