

**RESURRECTION HAPPENS!**  
*Sermon for EasterB – Jn 20:1-18*  
LPC. 4/1/18

Many of you who know me know this story, but I haven't told it in a while. Twenty years ago, just when my oldest was ready to go to college and I was contemplating seminary, my husband lost his job. Our annual household income plummeted to \$20,000, which was from my own part-time job. At the time, it felt like death.

Sometime later, positives began to emerge. Rich had been freed from a job that was killing him. For me the possibility of my own professional ministry was freed from a tie to a particular place. In retrospect, something like a resurrection occurred out of the "death" of job loss.

I have heard similar stories from some of the people to whom I have ministered over the years. People have said things like, "In a way, that cancer diagnosis was the best thing that ever happened to me," Or, "After my divorce, I thought my life was over, but now I feel more alive than ever." Maybe something like this happened in your life.

It may be comforting to know that scripture tells us that resurrection can be like this. In the moment, all people feel is death. The awakening to new life only becomes apparent later.

Let us, on this glorious Easter morning, take a look at Jesus' resurrection. What, in the earthly life of Jesus, is unique about the resurrection?

Is it that someone who was dead comes to life again? No. Jesus has raised people from the dead before, most notably Lazarus of Bethany. Even some of the Old Testament prophets, scripture tells us, had raised people from the dead. Jesus is not the only person who was raised from the dead.

Is it that in the Resurrection Jesus has been revealed as the Son of God? No. Remember Jesus' baptism, and again at the Transfiguration, where a voice comes from heaven saying "This is my Son"? These events were well attested by those who were present at the time.

Interestingly, one of the things that is unique about the Resurrection of Jesus, as related by all four Gospels, is that there are no witnesses. Many people see the body of Jesus laid in the tomb, but no one sees the moment at which Jesus awakes from the dead. They see only the abandoned shroud. No one sees Jesus pluck the cloth from his face, they see only the cloth balled up in a corner. No one sees the stone being rolled away, they see only that the stone has rolled away.

Here's the thing, folks. Resurrection happens. As a matter of fact, as Dr. Bonnie Thurston put it in her wonderful Easter Vigil sermon last night, God created the world for resurrection. But we often don't get to see it at the very moment when it happens, usually only in afterthought. We do have scriptural testimony, we have the tradition of the church, and we have our faith. This is how we know that resurrection happens. It is not for us to witness the actual event that forever frees us, Jesus' followers, from death. The evidence we have is circumstantial.

We do not generally see new life at the time of a job loss, a terrible diagnosis, a divorce or a death. What we have is a promise that resurrection happens, and that evil and death cannot finally triumph because love is stronger.

What we are able to see, perhaps, is circumstantial evidence of resurrection happening. We finally notice the tomb is empty. The grave clothes are not binding. The stone is rolled away. We are not dead. We live. There is hope. Jesus' resurrection promises this.

Mary Magdalene and Peter and the other disciple do not see Jesus alive in the tomb. The tomb is no place for the living. Jesus lives. The tomb is empty because Jesus has emptied death of its power and horror.

Resurrection happens. But we often are not ready to recognize it till we are ready to turn away from the tomb. Mary Magdalene finally sees Jesus outside the tomb only when she turns away from that place of death. But even now she doesn't at first recognize him. This too is typical of the pattern of human grief. We may get to a point where we are finally turn away from the place of death, but we don't yet recognize that new and better life is possible.

We may not recognize resurrection when we see it. But resurrection happens. The door to resurrection is always open, because Jesus has been to the place of death and opened it right up to the light. Jesus already knows us by name and is ready to call to us to this knowledge and hope and joy.

Resurrection happens. It has happened. It will happen. It is happening now. We may not see it. We may not be ready to see it. The limits of our sight and our unpreparedness change nothing. Jesus lives, proving that death and evil do not have the last word... will never have the last word... in our lives ... in all of creation...

Resurrection happens!