

Today Jesus talks about glory while the Church talks about rules. From that first Easter morn: the Church is always playing catch up with God.

When the stone was rolled away from the tomb, we discovered that the last barrier in life is not between life and death but **between life and life**.

Those women were witnesses to a cosmic shift, where dead ends became fertile with possibilities that frequently frighten us.

With an empty tomb, the Creator God revealed the long arc of human history. It began with God's breath moving across the water and continues breathing new life into human community – where humans are held hostage to fear.

For the disciples, the empty tomb held open the possibility that this Jesus was even more than the disciples had imagined... that all of Jesus's talk about love, and forgiveness and care of neighbor was broader than we had figured.

**It was from that moment that the Church began the race to catch up to their God who was forging ahead, changing the landscape of our lives.**

Being one of these believers, I understand why. Our lives have been formed by an imperfect, even violent community where power wins and losers abound. **It is truly inconceivable that the secret to life is love.**

Why? Because love seems too easy. To truly love allows for too much forgiveness, forgiveness which can spill over on to undeserving people, letting people 'off the hook', the people who are not penitent enough, the backsliders, and all those who fail to follow our moral code.

When we discover that death is not an ending but a new beginning we also discover that this wondrous good news comes with the expectation that in this new life, I would follow Jesus' footsteps.

That I would be expected to allow sinners to share the table with me and Jesus,

That I'd be expected to extend mercy and grace to adulterous women, and forgive my enemies.

**This is not the world we know, and not how we've been taught to operate.** In our world, mercy is parsed out in measured amounts and never wasted on folks who obviously are not deserving.

I think our hope has always been that one day such a world would exist: a world where love powered everything and mercy, grace and forgiveness were common, but we thought it was a special place reserved for the truly worthy – the real people of God – those who look and act like us – and Jesus would lead us there.

But when the tomb was found empty believers discovered that Jesus hadn't gone somewhere else **but was right here in THIS world that we know, walking AMONG us.**

Perhaps, like the first disciples, we too thought this was all an idle tale. It just doesn't seem possible that the kingdom Jesus was bringing into being was being birthed right now, and right here.

What was the result of all this? While Jesus talked of glory, the Church has talked about rules. Who was in and who was out, deciding for itself who God loved, who could enter the kingdom. Of course those were counted as worthy throughout the centuries looked suspiciously like the folks in charge.

At first it was just the Jews who were worthy and not the Gentiles. It was the men and not the women. Only those who were 100% whole and able were blessed by God and not the blind, lame and mentally impaired. Certainly not an Ethiopian eunuch. Those who were married with children were right and the divorced, adulterous and the suspiciously single were not.

For 2000 years, while Jesus lives in the glory of the creator, we, the people of God – the Church even today – have struggled to cope with the expansive, life giving, life affirming, indiscriminate love of God which, much to our dismay seems to welcome everyone to the table. Everyone.

**Instead** we have drawn lines between us and them, made rules, set up requirements, and in our human hubris insisted that we spoke for God. For Peter the line was between the clean and unclean, the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

In Luther's time the line was drawn between the Church of Rome and everyone else. And today? Where are we drawing the line today? Between races? Nationalities? Between differing sexual identities? Who has today's Church decided to be unworthy of God's love?

It is a challenge for us, the people of God, to figure out how to live as resurrection people – following a Jesus who in his lifetime broke down all the barriers which order our lives.

It is a challenge to follow a Jesus who called us into a human community where our actions are shaped by grace.

The people of God have been wrong from day one when the men dismissed the women's story. I can understand why –

We find a God whose desire is life and whose method is love just simply TOO BIG for us, so we squeeze God into a more familiar shape with more manageable expectations.

We may claim that we set up our rules and categories in order to protect the Church and the holiness of God but in truth, any God who raised Jesus out of a tomb has no need for our protection

I confess that it all makes me sigh. If I could only get it right. If I could only trust in this Jesus and this God – really trust in them. If I could grasp the love which flows from God to me....if I could believe and not fear....if I could just allow the glory of God to direct my days and my deeds.

If only I wasn't the fragile, frightened, flawed human being that I am...

....then the world would know that we are Christians by our love.