

Easter 2023 Trinity, Herkimer

They gathered in the shadowy stillness, bringing death and grief into the pre-dawn darkness. I expect that like most people, they were numbed by their shock, the enormity of their loss and the weight of shattered hopes.

Rome had claimed another victim. Life would roll inexorably toward death; nothing had or would change....for Jesus was dead.

Perhaps they looked at each other and asked “Where do we go from here? What do we do now? How much danger are we in?”

Then the earth moved under their feet.

The massive stone which had sealed the tomb was rolled away from the entrance – and a heavenly being appeared: bright as lightning with clothes white as snow.

They were afraid. You would be too....and not just because of the special effects but because **he was not there.**

“I know what you’re looking for” the angelic being said, and the whole scene is so ludicrous that laughter seems a reasonable response.

I know, the angel said.....I know what you are yearning for, hoping for....and you think it is the Jesus who was nailed to a cross. Well, he is not here. He has been raised. While you slept, God was at work.

The earthquake left them unbalanced. The angel left them dumbfounded.

The message was simply incomprehensible.

And they did not understand. I do not understand.

What about you?

Isn't that why you came today? Looking for...listening for that announcement which will shake up this world – give birth to a new hope – allow you to draw a first breath of a new life?

Let us be clear. **I offer no explanations.** I won't insult you with metaphors which only dilute the truth and tame this dangerous mystery

Something happened on the other side of that stone – something to shake us out of our turpitude, our self-centered values, our moral compromises, and strained compassion.....something which cuts short our profit-loss analysis of every single human interaction....

Something happened – and it breaks open not just the future but it breaks open the NOW. We might not understand it all, but it makes us giddy enough to shout out a couple of ALLELUIAS.

He is not here. He has been raised!

The tomb has become a womb – and a greater life has been born. The life we know now are but the labor pains working us towards the moment of new birth beyond the tomb.....and that big old stone is the hinge of a new hope for all who gather today.

Even if they don't understand.

All the easy things to say about the Triune God – all the sensible things one might say - are overwhelmed by the fact that Jesus stepped out of the grave and in so doing renewed life beyond the border of ordinary existence.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Christ did not come into this world that we might understand him, but that we might cling to him in order to be caught up in the immense event of resurrection.”

...that we might be caught up! In the event of resurrection!

Many Renaissance paintings of Christ's ascension show open tombs and the dead rising up – clinging to the ascending Jesus. Jesus pulls them from death and makes them a part of the Great Resurrection

with the promise that one day Jesus will pull us out of the tomb of our dog eat dog thinking and save us from our least selves and offer us a new horizon for life.

Easter is not a memorial of some past event, but a reminder of the gift of life which has already been given to us in and through Jesus –

This Jesus who keeps showing up wherever we go to remind us that the tomb is open, the stone rolled away, and the future lies before us.

As my body ages and my friends breathe their last, it is the most incomprehensible thing in my life – and that includes advanced math and quantum physics!

So every Easter morning, trumpets will sound and music ring out. Flowers will be gathered and lots of people who stand on the edges of the crowd will press forward to hear this story again.

Easter doesn't erase our day to day fear of disaster, but it enables us to keep faith in the midst of our fear. **He IS risen!** This gives us the courage to 'keep on keeping on' for eternity lies ahead – and it lies beyond the tomb.

Let me proclaim it again: He is not here! He has been raised!

Many days I only half believe it....but on the days when faith floods my being, I too can feel the earth move under my feet, and maybe catch a glimpse of a fleeing angelic figure.

Then I say to myself, "Look, it is the Lord".

It is to this Jesus I cling and I invite you to reach out and touch the power and promise of life lived for the breadth of eternity.

But in the end, I have no explanations. All I have is faith.