

**April 17, 2022**  
**The Day of The Resurrection**

**Meditation:** “Stone. What? Wow! Why? Oh yeah. Fake news. OMG!”

This story has it all: The mundane and the sacred, love and devotion, pain and heartache, outrage and anger, disbelief, awe and wonder, and the profound.

The spices used to embalm the body, and the stone in front of the tomb are the mundane things of everyday life, and death.

One of the spices would have been myrrh. Remember the gifts of the Magi at his birth? And this isn't even the second time that myrrh enters the story. For in addition to being used to anoint the dead and prepare them for burial, myrrh was also an analgesic that acts on the opioid receptors in the brain. Remember the 'sour wine' offered to Jesus while he hung on the cross – that's right, wine mixed with myrrh to deaden the pain of the beating and the crucifixion.

And the stone, a large round stone that would have taken two men with levers to roll away, was rolled in front of tombs, caves really, hewn from the hillside, to prevent scavenging animals from entering the cave and desecrating (eating) the deceased. To find the stone rolled away was not something that would have happened by accident. I wonder, is that why there were more than three women there? To roll away the stone so they could anoint his body? Whatever the reason, theirs – Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women – was an act of deep love and devotion. In the midst of their pain and heartache over the crucifixion and death of Jesus, they discovered the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. I can almost feel their puzzlement, outrage, and anger rising. Who would do such a thing and why?

And then there was the fear that seized them when the angels – messengers from God – suddenly appeared beside them, arrayed in dazzling clothes. They fell to their hands and knees and lowered their faces to the ground. The appearance of angels, while not unknown, was not an everyday occurrence. And the angels ask them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? Remember what he said, that on the third day he would rise again?” I can imagine the women saying, “Oh yeah, we remember that. Do you mean we were actually supposed to believe it – that he would actually rise from the dead – when such a thing has never happened before? Well, other than the time Jesus raised that sick girl..... And the time he called Lazarus out of his tomb.”

The women returned to the eleven remaining apostles – no longer disciples (students), but now apostles (ones sent to spread the good news) – and told them all that they had seen and heard. Now in the ancient world, for the sake of veracity, you had to have a minimum of two witnesses, and here were at least four witnesses. The problem was, that all of these witnesses were women. The apostles thought their story was fake news. These men weren't gullible enough to believe that Jesus had risen from death, especially since it was only a group of women reporting the news. They had to verify it for themselves. Peter couldn't wait for the full public inquiry, so he ran to the tomb right away. There, he looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there where they had been cast off. And after seeing the scene, Peter staggered home lost in awe and wonder.

To all of this, I ask, so what?

What does the empty tomb mean to us?

Is it just another empty promise?

Is it only about the promise of eternal life? Do I even want an eternity of this life?

Is it only about life after death, in some other time, in some other place? What good is that to me right now?

The Romans used the cross to instill fear – to maintain control over people. Jesus' crucifixion was intended to send a warning to people not to upset the status quo. And here is the epiphany. The resurrection is not about Jesus. It's about God. The resurrection is God's affirmation of life, and love, and hope, and justice, and peace, and joy. The resurrection is about how to live, to truly live this life, even in the face of fear and death. As The Very Rev. Dr. Robert Smith said, "The fear of death never kept anyone from dying, the fear of death only keeps us from living."

So the real question is – what does the resurrection mean for us, today, and for how we live our lives now – as individuals, and as a worshipping community?

You don't have to answer right now..... we have an entire season to discern the answer.... We have 50 days until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit comes to animate and empower us to live that life.