

Pastor Keith E. Wiens
Text: Luke 24:1-12

April 4, 2010
Festival of Easter

TRULY A WONDER!

Greetings to you and welcome! I am excited that you are here and I am very thankful you have chosen to worship here on this beautiful Easter morning. A blessed Easter to each of you!

Isn't it incredible! I can't think of anything quite like Easter. The resurrection of Jesus is absolutely the most incredible thing that has ever happened! It truly is a wonder!

The first four books of the New Testament all tell the story of the resurrection of Jesus. They come at it from different directions and they provide different details, but they all convey a sense of wonder, awe, astonishment, surprise.

On at least three occasions Jesus told the disciples that he would rise from the dead. And yet, when it happened, no one - absolutely no one! - expected it. They were all totally surprised!

In the story we just heard from the Gospel of Luke, two women show up at the cemetery with their burial spices, intending to anoint the dead body of Jesus with the spices. But, they find no body in the tomb. They are puzzled, perplexed. On Friday they had watched Joseph of Arimathea place Jesus' body in this tomb. But now there is no body.

The angels remind the women that Jesus said he would rise from the dead. But it didn't sink in and they weren't expecting it. They pull themselves together, and they rush off to tell the other disciples. Peter then runs to the tomb. He looks in the grave. He doesn't see a dead body, but he does see the linen grave cloths which had been wrapped around Jesus and he is amazed!

In the Gospel of Mark, the women go to the tomb early on Sunday morning. They are surprised to find the huge stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. They enter the tomb, and instead of a dead body they find an angel who says that Jesus has been raised, and they were "astonished."

In the Gospel of Matthew, two Mary's go to the tomb early on Sunday morning. They find no body and rush off to tell the disciples. But along the way they meet Jesus. And they fall to their knees in worship and adoration!

In the Gospel of John, Mary Magdalene discovers the tomb is empty. She runs off to tell the disciples. After telling the disciples, she then returns to the tomb, distraught and weeping, thinking someone had stolen the body. She sees a man she assumes is the gardener. "Show me where you have taken the body," she says. The man wasn't the gardener; the man was Jesus. "Mary!" he said. And Mary was immediately filled with wonder and joy and delight and says, "Rabboni," which means, "my dear teacher!"

Wonder! Awe! Astonishment! Surprise! Sheer delight! Worship and adoration! How else does one respond to the resurrection of Jesus?

Unfortunately, we do not live in a world that encourages people to wonder. When we were children, we were in a constant state of wonder. The world was new. Each day was a new adventure. Words were wondrous. Running was wondrous. Touch, taste, sound were all wonders. We lived in a world of wonders. That's the way it is with children.

But gradually the sense of wonder gets squeezed out of us. As we develop in knowledge and competence, as we gain mastery over ourselves and our environment, we wonder less and less.

What would it be like to regain our sense of wonder?

What would it be like to be filled with wonder over God's creation? To marvel over the mighty acts of God which go back to the very beginning of time? To be filled with awe over God's determination throughout history to save us? To be fascinated with Jesus - his birth, his teachings, his miracles? To marvel at his willingness to die for us? And most of all, what would it be like to have an overwhelming sense of wonderment over the most incredible thing that has ever happened in all of history - the resurrection of Jesus? What would that be like?

How would it change our lives? And to be sure, it would definitely change us! Instead of dwelling on our problems, we would dwell on God's love. Instead of complaining about what is wrong, we would give thanks for what is right. Instead of getting down on ourselves, we would marvel at what God is doing in our lives. Instead of focusing on our aches and pains, we would focus on the joy of living a new day.

The resurrection of Jesus changed the first Christians. It gave them a new way of looking at life - and a new way of living life! It filled them with joy and excitement. It inspired them to love. It gave them courage to speak about Jesus and heal the sick and serve the poor. It gave them a deep desire and determination to gather together and support one another and build up the church.

In the next several weeks we want to talk more about the resurrection of Jesus and what a difference it can make in our lives. Today, though, let us simply be filled with wonder and awe. Let us delight in God! Let us marvel at what God is doing. Let us praise and worship and adore our great and awesome God!

This is indeed the day the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!