

Easter, 2015

Last night the church was dark and bare, like the empty tomb. We heard the story of creation, breath moving over the waters, escape from oppression through the desert wilderness, dry bones wanting to turn back, and manna drawing us on to a land of promise. Then the lights came on, bells rung, altar linens and silver vessels re-appeared. Banners are on the walls. We have spring flowers (Yes, they will even come outside)

The resurrection reminds us we come through a history. We are about more than happy, clappy. Mary, Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came grieving to do the rites of burial. They fretted walking down the road, 'Who will roll away the rock?.' When they arrived, the tomb was empty, the rock rolled away. They were alarmed, amazed, and terrified, we hear.

They didn't at first say, Happy Easter, like Happy Birthday. More was at stake. Where they expected a gray rock at the end of the road, they found open space. Where they expected darkness, they found light. When they expected to move on with grim reality - same old, same old; now the rock has rolled over. A future opens. God is present in a new way. The women ran to tell the male disciples who were in hiding.

We do ring bells in astonishment, clap and sing, hug and say Happy Easter. We also do well to find times to be quiet, and let Easter unfold. There are seven Sundays of Easter appearances - behind closed doors, by the lake, on the road, in the garden. Reality is shaken up and turned over. It takes at least the next two months to let it all sink in. It really takes a lifetime.

Perhaps you can remember coming to, coming 'round, or getting back on your feet after serious illness or loss. I remember a time after surgery with some accompanying depression. I didn't feel like eating much; night and day were all a blur; I felt like a worm, and no man, as one of the psalms say. Then one week someone came to visit. I knew him a bit, not really well. But he made the effort to come. We talked; he listened; he seemed to both understand and encourage. He shared some of his own trials.

The next morning, scrambled eggs tasted good for the first time in weeks. I made a peanut butter sandwich for lunch, and gloried in how the peanut butter spread across fresh bread, and added a slice of tomato, and onion. Happy Easter!

Believing in Christ is not an individual thing. We can't work it up by some mental gymnastics. It is lived, shared, spoken, and enacted with others. Try as I might, I can't be a Christian on my own. I need a community to help me walk down the road. And ours is not a kingdom for the worthy. Ours is a community for the amazed, for the hungry. Our table is about feeding and being fed, holding and being held, receiving and giving blessings. What we do here spreads beyond our doors.

Happy Easter. Even more, a Joyous Easter - in Christ, leading us down the road, where the rock is rolled away.