

What If Life Wins?

Luke 24:1-12

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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Rev. Jill Cameron Michel

It seemed unbelievable.

Sometimes we are hard on the disciples when we read comments like what Luke says when he writes, “But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them” (Luke 24:11, NRSVUE).

But, it seemed unbelievable.

Still we think the disciples should have celebrated immediately, should have understood everything and believed without question.

But, it seemed unbelievable.

And yet we ask questions like:

- How could they not have believed after all the time they spent with Jesus?
- Weren't they listening to what Jesus told them?
- Would they have believed this if it had been a man who delivered the message?
- What did the disciples need? Did they need to see for themselves? Well, then, why hadn't *they* gone to the tomb that morning? I suspect that need is what drove Peter to the tomb after the women's announcement.

But, perhaps, rather than wondering *why* it seemed unbelievable, perhaps we need to simply admit *that* it seemed, that it seems, unbelievable.

Even if we are hesitant to say it, we know the truth of that.

Yes, most of us have grown up with the story of resurrection. It has been in the background of our lives and at the core of our faith in such a way that we sometimes forget to be surprised by it, or sometimes don't feel like we have the right to wonder about it. But when push comes to shove, we know what it is to wonder about resurrection. We know what it is, unless we are simply able to set aside our modern way of thinking, we know what it is to struggle to believe.

And yet, what if the proclamation of resurrection, the celebratory songs of Easter, are about a Truth that is even bigger than our belief or disbelief in the details of this story? What if, whether we accept this story at face value or can't help but think it's a made up tale or find ourselves somewhere in between, what if there is room for all of us in the Truth that lies behind resurrection?

What if the Truth of this story, the Truth that we are invited to embrace, the Truth that we celebrate on Easter - and that we can celebrate even in the midst of our questions - is that God's intention is for life, that God's intention is for love, that God's intention is for wholeness.

See, we don't only need to look to the cross or to the tomb as they placed Jesus' body in it on a Friday, in order to see places where death and destruction seem to have taken the day.

Around us people struggle for even the basic provisions of food and housing and medical care.

Around us people are pitted against each other being told that their neighbor is their enemy, that they should fear people not like them.

Around us inconvenient truths are being removed from the record and replaced with proclamations that benefit the powerful.

Around us we see so many examples of death, destruction, and divisiveness.

And yet, today is Easter. Today is the day that we wake to a resurrection proclamation.

Today is the day when we claim again that God's way is the way of life and of love.

Today is the day when we recenter ourselves on that Truth.

Today is the day when we claim to be resurrection people - people who believe in life, who believe in love, and who will work to bring these realities into all the fragmented corners of our world.

Throughout the six weeks of Lent, as we journeyed toward Easter, we as a congregation have been practicing affirmations. Each week we have made a claim about whose we are, that we belong to God, and about what it means to be God's children, what is at the core of our being.

The affirmations we have made are these:

- We are loved.
- We are good.
- We are forgiven.
- We are gifted.
- We are connected.
- We are brave.

Remembering these things has not just been a practice in personal self-affirmation, though I hope it has been an important practice as each of us has leaned in to seeing ourselves through God's eyes.

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But additionally, practicing these affirmations has been a reminder about God's intentions for us *and* for the world.

See, each of these realities that we have claimed, each of these things is life giving. Each of these parts of who we are - loved, good, forgiven, gifted, connected, and brave - each of these are realities from which we are invited to live. And when we do, they are realities that help build on the claim that life is more powerful than death and love is more powerful than fear.

There are many voices working for death, many voices that would tell us things that are contrary to the heart of God. And yet, we have claimed again and again that God whispers words of life in our ears.

What if resurrection looks like you claiming your belovedness instead of believing voices that work to belittle you?

What if resurrection looks like you realizing your own giftedness and using it to make a difference in the world?

What if resurrection looks like you remembering that while imperfect, you are forgiven and your sins don't get to tell your story?

What if resurrection looks like you standing tall in courage, being brave even in the face of your fear?

Today we celebrate resurrection.

We celebrate the story of our faith, a story that says that even when the powers of the empire chose death, God chose life.

We celebrate the stories of our lives, the moments when we have remembered whose we are, that we belong to God - and have lived from God's heart.

We celebrate the opportunities around us to choose life, to choose love, to choose wholeness.

Maybe the question for today isn't: Did this really happen? But rather, maybe our question is: What if life wins?

What if we take the opportunities we are afforded and help midwife life into existence?

What if we claim again our identity as God's children and help others claim that identity, too?

What if, in the face of all the evidence around us of the power of death, we choose God's life...life for all people...life rooted in love?

What if we embrace the Truth of resurrection...that no matter what, life wins? Amen.