

Perplexed

John 11: 1, 17-26, Luke 24:1-12

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Start by dropping a hard-boiled egg from balcony!

Okay, on Easter Sunday I just dropped a hard-boiled egg from the balcony of the sanctuary and it cracked on the floor. I wonder what thoughts that are G-rated came to your mind when I did that? Shout them out!

Now Luke says that when the women got to Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning, expecting to anoint his dead body with spices as was their custom, they found the large stone already rolled back and the tomb empty. Then he describes their feeling as "perplexed." Confused. Discombobulated. Puzzled. Bewildered. Flummoxed.

I am sure they were all of the above. I also think that some of your words about me dropping the egg also came to their minds and their lips! Startled. Stunned. Upset. Afraid. Angry. Surprised.

Surprised. Perplexed. Jesus' **death** had not surprised the women or perplexed them. All their lives they had seen the way human beings treat each other. They had seen it all, from women and children being abused by their families, to slaves being beaten, to the poor dying of hunger, to men of all races being crucified or killed in other ways under Roman justice. That Jesus, who challenged powers of all kinds, would eventually be treated the same saddened them to the core, but did not surprise them.

Odd, isn't it, that human violence does not surprise us, but that goodness beyond all hope leaves us disbelieving and confused? In the words of Paul Simon, "When something goes right, it's likely to

lose me, it's apt to confuse me, cause it's such an unusual sight. And I can't get used to something so right."

The women, and later the disciples, should not have been in the least surprised that the tomb was empty. Jesus told them that on the third day he would rise. He told them more than once. You know how it is that if you hear 10 good things and 1 bad thing, you remember the bad thing? The week leading up to that Sunday had been full of bad things. They forgot. Unbelievably, they forgot what Jesus promised. Hence, they were perplexed, discombobulated!

The angels tried to re-combobulate them! Hello, they said, remember? Remember! "I am the resurrection and the life!" Jesus had said, just before Lazarus walked alive from his tomb! Remember. "God does not desire the death of sinners, but that sinners turn from their ways and live!" Remember. "I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly!" Remember. "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete!" Remember.

Today is about us remembering what Jesus promised. Is it still possible that goodness beyond all hope is at work in the world we live in? That little egg I dropped cannot be made right again, as so much pain and suffering in our world cannot be made right again. What we celebrate this morning is so much more complicated than a simple equation of bad thing fixed by good thing. God never promised, in fact, that bad things would not happen. God knows human beings better than that. What we celebrate is that God continues to be at work in the midst of ruin of all kinds. God always has been.

And our call is to discover God at work, rejoice, and then join in the work. Easter can't stop with the Hallelujah Chorus! The angels told the women to go find the disciples and tell them the good news, that God's love is stronger than human hate and that God was not out to punish in anger, but rather to bring life and love. Go spread that news, the angels said. The women did! At first, the

women's pronouncement was greeted with disbelief and disdain. "These words seemed to the apostles to be an idle tale, and they did not believe them."

Nevertheless, they persisted. They would not shut up, in fact, and kept telling all Jesus' followers what the 11 leaders would not believe. They kept talking about it until Jesus came and stood among them later that day, putting all disbelief to rest.

Beloved, when you are perplexed, angry, hurt, bewildered and flummoxed by the evil, the hurtful, the violent, the struggle of this world, remember! Remember being here this morning and hearing this good news that keeps being told by women and men around the world. Remember that the tomb was empty, and that sometimes when an egg breaks open (open plastic egg from pocket), there is not a mess, but rather life, beauty, joy, hope, maybe even chocolate! The egg is not one of the symbols of Easter by accident. It represents something that looks dead, yet contains life within. Like our lives sometimes.

The story we tell this morning is not an idle tale. Jesus is the resurrection, and the life. The victim of human violence returns to life with words of peace, not vengeance. God is at work in love, even in the midst of ruin. Especially in the midst of ruin. Be not perplexed, beloved. Be persistent in telling the story and living the love of God in ruin or beauty. Amid the scary around us these days, don't give in to hopelessness or disbelief. Rise up, in hope and life! Because, Christ is risen. Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!