

**Easter Sunday
April 20, 2014**

Suddenly

“After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came and rolled back the stone....His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.” Matthew 28: 1-3

***Alleluia! Christ is Risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

I.

There is a wonderful hymn that captures beautifully the significance and joy of our celebration this morning. The text of the hymn is inspired by the Magnificat – the Song of Mary when she learns from the angel Gabriel that she shall be the mother of Jesus – “A mother’s hymn of joy in the birth of her child.”

Today, too, is a kind of birth.

It is hymn #723 “Canticle of the Turning.”

Refrain

*“My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.”*

Yes, the world is about to turn.

II.

If you had to come up with one word that best describes God’s activity in the scripture, what would it be? What is the one word that tells you what to expect from God? What is the word that best captures the impact – the effect – of God’s actions? What would that one word be?

The word I would pick is the one that features prominently in our Gospel this morning – “suddenly.”

“After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came and rolled back the stone....His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.”

Later in the same Gospel reading, again... *“So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy...Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them and they came to him, took hold of his feet and worshipped him.”*

Suddenly. How often that word appears in the Scriptures as a prelude to what God is about to do. Suddenly – an angel appears to the Virgin Mary to announce the birth of the Messiah and she breaks out in song.

The dictionary defines “suddenly” as “the unforeseen; unprepared for; something that happens unexpectedly.”

“For the dawn draws near and the world is about to turn.”

III.

We are witnesses to these things; the activity of God in our midst.

Read the four Gospel accounts of the resurrection carefully and you’ll notice that something is missing. There is no description of the resurrection of Jesus; no direct description of the activity of God, raising Jesus from the dead. God’s tremendous activity is not directly observed – not described or reported.

But the *effect* is – the women came to the tomb, prepared and expecting to honor the dead. Suddenly their plans were disrupted, their lives altered. The angel announces God’s action, *“Do not be afraid. Jesus who was crucified, He is not here; for he has been raised.”*

Suddenly,
the world turns,
dawn breaks,
tears turn to joy.

IV.

How Mary, Mother of our Lord, must have felt. She wept at the foot of the cross to see her son tortured and crucified before her. Her heart must have nearly burst with so great a sadness and sorrow. Imagine how she felt when the women returned from the tomb and reported the angel’s news. Jesus is alive. My son lives and is whole again.

Suddenly.
Unexpectedly.
Unforeseen.
Unknown and unknowable.

This bursting news, exploding joy, of what God has done and what God will yet do with you and me and everyone in this world is our privilege to share. You and I are witnesses. The effect of God’s activity in our lives reflected on our face – joy, bursting joy.

Things will not always be the same. Our sorrows will not rule the dawn. Our fears and broken world are about to change. For what we know about God, we proclaim.

Our God is the disruptor God.

From God, expect the sudden. Prepare to be caught by surprise by the unforeseen.

Resurrection is another kind of birth. It is a sudden, unexpected twist in our story by the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

*“My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.”*

Shine with God’s own brilliant light.

***Alleluia! Christ is Risen.
He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!***