

C Easter sunrise, Narrative 32
April 16, 2017
Poulsbo
Pastor Alison Shane

Luke 24:1-12

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace from God our father, and the risen Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen

“On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.” You can feel the quiet of that morning, can’t you?

Then that quiet turns to disquiet. The stone is rolled away – that’s a good thing, since they needed to get into the tomb to do their work. But there’s no body. That’s a bad thing. They need the body in order to perform the rituals. But there’s no shock or horror or anything for these women, according to Luke; they’re just perplexed. Where did the body go? What do we do now?

In that quiet and that disquiet, they probably didn’t expect two shiny dudes to show up and say, “What are you doing HERE?!” If it had been TV, the women would have shot back, “I could ask you the same question.” But it wasn’t TV; these women had angels appear beside them. Luke is kinda big on angels, but usually they start with a gentle, “Be not afraid.” Not these angels. These ones jump right in with, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” In other words, “Hey, dummies! What are you doing here?” The sass is strong with these supernatural creatures. But they ask a serious question, a question for us even today: What are YOU doing here?

This is a mirror question. A question that makes us look more clearly at ourselves and into ourselves, a question God asks to make us examine our innermost parts. What ARE we doing here?

Sometimes when God holds up that mirror, we find that we, like the women at the tomb, are looking for the dead. Because suffering and death is the way of the world. We expect it at every turn. We make jokes about it. “With my luck...” “Knowing me, I’ll mess this up.” Often we are surprised when we encounter something life-giving, we are amazed when we experience grace.

And God says, “What are you DOING here? Why are you looking for the dead? Why are you *expecting* death? I am life. I am love. I am here. See me.

Other times when God holds up that mirror and asks, “What are you doing here?” we find that, also like the women at the tomb, we are looking for the living among the dead. We seek life in things that cannot give life. We seek sustenance from things that cannot sustain. We seek connection in ways that do not nourish our souls. “What are you doing *here*? Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

We wander around, looking for meaning, for purpose, for life. And God says, “What are you doing? Come here.”

Meaning, purpose, life. Here. In water, in bread and wine, in Word, in music, in Thursday’s mandate to love one another, in mission and sending. Here, God asks that mirror question, and we have the answer. What are you doing here? I am here because God showed me hope in an empty tomb. I am here because there is One who loves me, even knowing the worst of me. I am here because I experience freedom and forgiveness in the bread and wine. I am here

because here makes sense of out there. Here gives me a reason to be in the worst places out there. Here helps me make it through the senselessness out there.

And out there is where we belong. After their encounter at the tomb, the women went back – back to their lives, back to the gathered disciples – and they told what they had experienced at the tomb. Risking being thought silly or even delirious, they told. Nobody told them to tell others, but they did, because this is a story that begs to be told.

And while it may seem a strange story to tell in this digital, virtual, over-connected but isolated world, the story still begs to be told.

Because it is exactly this digital, virtual, over-connected but isolated world that sees us coming here on Sundays and asks, “What are you doing *here*?” It is exactly this narcissistic, every-man-for-himself world that sees us at work out there, loving, serving, washing feet, and asks, “What are you *doing* here?”

And when the world asks, what is your empty tomb answer? Will you tell them how God showed you hope in an empty tomb? Will you tell them how there is One who loves you, even knowing the worst of you? Will you tell them how you experience freedom and forgiveness in the bread and wine? Will you tell them how here makes sense of out there? Will you tell them how here gives you a reason to be in the worst places out there? Will you tell them how here helps you through the senselessness out there? Will you tell them how Jesus makes life worth living and death not worth fearing?

What’s your empty tomb answer? What’s your story to share when you return from the empty tomb? What are YOU doing here?