

Easter Day – Year C – April 4, 2010
Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12
Susan E. Wilmot

Alleluia! Christ is Risen. The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

Have you seen those birthday cards that have a whole bunch of information about the year you were born on them? Mine would read something like this. In this year, John F. Kennedy becomes our 35th President. The Peace Corps is established. Barbie is introduced to her new boyfriend, Ken. The average income is a little over \$5,300 a year. A loaf of bread is 21 cents, and a gallon of gas costs a whole quarter! Wow! Now picture the card for someone who was born in the 1 A.D. In this year, a man called Jesus was crucified, died and was buried. A bunch of women come to His tomb three days later to anoint His corpse, but His body is gone! Not long after, Jesus' followers proclaimed Him as the Messiah, Savior and Lord, and many believed in Him, and became followers of the Way. Pretty cool, huh? Mostly, it's fun to take a little walk down memory lane, but sometimes it's painful too. Barbara Streisand sang it in *The Way We Were*. Part of the first verse says, "memories / Like the corners of my mind / Misty watercolor memories / Of the way we were." I bet you already know the second verse. It's a question, and one we might do well to consider this Easter morning. "Can it be that it was all so simple then / Or has time rewritten every line?" Let's see shall we?

It's early on the first day of the week. The women walk together to Jesus' tomb. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women. They have each spent the Sabbath reflecting on what has happened, mourning the death of their beloved Jesus. When they find the tomb is empty, Luke tells us that two men in dazzling white clothes appear. Their words are an important gift to the lost and perplexed women, "**Remember**, how he told you...." The Scripture goes on to tell us that the women "**remembered** [Jesus'] words." They remember so vividly and so completely that they could have written the birthday card for that year. In our spiritual remembrance, we experience much more than a cognitive function. Remembering is an act that includes both understanding and spiritual insight. Remembrance is a doorway to response, according to God's gift of revelation. For example, when we gather at the Lord's Table and share Holy Communion we participate in the acts that Jesus first performed in the upper room with His disciples at the Last Supper. Yet in doing this for the remembrance of Christ, Holy Communion is much more than a reenactment. It's a continuous practice, recalling to mind all that Christ is for us, and all that Christ has done for us. Remembrance is a form of presence, whereby we experience the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in the company of all the heavenly host, and in the presence of all the saints. When we participate in the greatest story of ever told, the whole history of salvation, and especially Jesus' glorious resurrection, we draw closer to God, and God comes closer to us. For these women, and for you and me, the act of spiritual remembrance is like throwing open every window, every door in our spiritual home. It is opening our own hearts and minds, seeing as if for the first time Jesus teaching, healing, restoring life and hope, and releasing us from sin and death by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The women are transformed in their recollection. They have connected the dots, and are no longer lost. The key to their newfound faith is in the events of Jesus' life, which they now recognize as Jesus' own articulation of the purpose of God. That is in redeeming Jesus' suffering and death; God is reconciling the whole world to Himself in Christ Jesus. God is graciously offering to all the gift of salvation through faith in Christ. Blessing us with healing, and creating a new community, whose lives reflect resurrection living. A part of that new community of faith is gathered here today, and each week we come together to celebrate God's good gifts, to encourage one another, and to study God's word. For the women at the tomb, reflection opens the door to insight, and provokes a response – they go immediately to share the good news with the remaining disciples. For you and me, the revelation of divine love in Christ's death and resurrection also prompts us to action. Perhaps it really is simple. The good news of Jesus' resurrection is still good news. The resurrection may be a mysterious event of

divine vindication, but in our common memory and connection as members of Christ's Body, the resurrection is still happening every day.

Jesus' resurrection is an invitation to live as Jesus lived. It's not some impossible ideal, but as simple as sharing food with the hungry and dispossessed, as we do today. Today is Easter Sunday, but it is also First Fruits Sunday, and the food we have collected will be delivered to the Love Kitchen in Pinetop for the benefit of our hungry neighbors. Jesus' resurrection connects us as the Body of Christ in our communal acts of faith – our faith in action – like offering a prayer of healing for the sick, the wounded, or the desperate, as each member of our Links of Prayer team does every day. Jesus' resurrection is the hope we share, inspiring us to speak up against the status quo demanded by unjust power systems, and to give voice to those who have been silenced by brutality. Resurrection is tangible in the wonderful meal so many of us shared at the Robbie Burns dinner in support of the Safe House. We share the joy and hope of resurrection when we gather to raise money for our Outreach ministries, and give of ourselves to make events like Food Around the World, and the Annual Rummage Sale so successful.

What does resurrection living look like and feel like? It looks like *Practicing God's Graciousness*, sharing the gift of hospitality with a recipe from *The Best Cookbook Ever*, opening our doors to groups like Narcotics Anonymous, and taking Holy Communion to those who can't make it to church. Giving the gift of time to care for our church facilities, set the altar each week, and wash the linens. It looks like riding down the Deuce of Clubs proclaiming Our Saviour's name in the blistering heat of July, and the freezing cold of December! It feels like the joy of sharing Christmas with our Angel Tree children. It feels like the satisfaction of knowing that our offering of time to fix up buildings allows a new generation of Navajo youth to experience resurrection in Leupp. It looks like the beautiful face of a child, whose cleft palette has been repaired at the St. Andrew's Clinic near the Mexican border. It looks like a big tub filled with gifts for the Bread of Life mission in Holbrook, or a box full of soap, toothbrushes and other items ready to be sent to Lutheran World Relief for the poor and disposed all over the world. The love of Christ is shared with our troops, a long way from home, through cookies and chocolate, and all manner of gifts. Jesus' resurrection is lived out in this place every time we share a cup of fair trade coffee, just as we do at our fellowship time after all our Sunday services. Jesus is alive and well in this community, because we care enough to call someone we haven't seen for a while, visit those in hospital, run an errand for a neighbor, send a birthday card, or offer a ride to church. We are living witnesses to the power of the resurrection to change lives every time we exercise our purchasing power by refusing to condone unjust labor practices. The kingdom of God gets a little bigger each time we refuse to participate in any form of violence. You and I bear witness to our resurrection lives when we gather and sing to the Lord with joyful voices. The Word of God is shared in our loving sponsorship of a Little League Team, and by sharing God's love with our children at Vacation Bible School. New life and hope is happening here in many ways, including the blessing of sharing our resources with our partner in ministry, FaithWorks. Working together, we are helping to set up a feeding station and health clinic for the poorest of the poor in Tanzania.

The truth of the resurrection is that it is planted in every heart like a seed – a seed that bursts forth with new life through the gift of faith. Our faith, in turn, helps us to recall the story of salvation, and to respond by putting our faith into action, and living the continuing gift of resurrection every day. Hear it! See it! Remember it! Experience it! Believe it! We don't have to rewrite anything, it *is* as simple as this: make your resurrection witness a part of this year's account, in God's amazing story of salvation.

Alleluia!