

Easter 2010  
April 4

1 Corinthians 15:19-26  
Luke 24:1-12

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

It's an odd question, isn't it?

Because these women KNEW Jesus was dead. They had traveled with him throughout Galilee, had supported him financially with money they had inherited from dead husbands or fathers. They had stood outside the *basilica*, the Roman judgment hall and at the foot of the cross, outside the ring of soldiers and political officials who carried out executions. They watched where the authorities took Jesus' lifeless body, made note of which tomb it had been put in so they could go back and give him a decent burial.

So they knew the whole story. They had no expectations. They *certainly* did NOT expect to find an open, empty tomb. They certainly did not expect to find a Risen, Living Lord.

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

It is a mistake we humans tend to make. Because as much as we fear it, and try to avoid it, we understand death. Death sets things for us. We can deal with what is dead, we know what to expect from it. Things that are dead are safe – they don't challenge us, or surprise us. I think that's why eulogies tend to be so gracious at funerals. We can be kind to those who no longer challenge us.

Even in the church that was born of the resurrection, we often cling to what is dead – to the way we used to be, the way things used to be. In fact, when things are dead and gone they take on a glow, a brightness they never had in real life. I've been to funerals where I half expected the deceased to sit and say, "Who the heck are they talking about?" And we expect those glorious days of the past to return to us as we remember them (which they fell short of to begin with) instead of moving ahead into God's future.

Easter is not about looking at about a dead past. It is about living in God's power of transformation. It is so much easier to have a dead Jesus safely in a tomb than a Risen Christ who is a living companion<sup>1</sup>, because Christ is all about taking the alternative route, the challenging path, the open-ended journey. He doesn't tell you what roads you'll be taking or where you'll stop for lunch or gas or even to stretch your legs. He only tells you it's a miraculous journey and the final destination is God's Place – and if you're doing it right, you get to experience God's Place before you get there, a place where enemies are welcomed and fed and the hopeless are made whole, where power is not feared<sup>2</sup>; a place where justice, hope, peace, mercy, forgiveness, and joy are the tools and the currency of life together.

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<sup>1</sup> The idea comes from

Andrea La Sonde Anastos notes “A dead Jesus makes no demands on me. A dead Jesus will never ask me to change from what is expedient to what is just, from what is safe to what is abundant.”

A Living Christ – that’s a whole ‘nother ball game!

Now the women see and hear all this and go back and tell the Eleven and everyone else who had been with Jesus what they have seen and heard and even do a little preaching because they have remembered the Truth of what Jesus told them. “But these words seemed to them [the disciples] to be the ranting of lunatics and they did not believe them,” says Luke.

You are *never* responsible for making someone else believe. You *are* responsible (and ONLY responsible) for speaking the truth about your life, about the places, people, and ways in which you have experienced grace, love, forgiveness, and inclusion. Even if no one believes you, you must speak your truth. The dismissal of the women’s story didn’t make their witness less true.<sup>3</sup> And it even captured Simon Peter’s curiosity – it got him intrigued enough to want to check it out for himself – and he was amazed.

Do not look for the living among the dead. Look for the Risen Christ in the lives of people who tell you, “We have seen the Lord!” For resurrection is not a one-time deal. It’s an on-going process and Christ appears to people like Paul, born too late, and to people like us who struggle with the questions of everyday life. Christ is acting in the lives of folks who know that faith is what lets you work for decent housing while you work to keep a roof over your own head. Resurrection is what lets you touch the loneliness and fear of an unpleasant person with compassion rather than avoidance. The Living Christ is the one who allows us to say, “For all that has been. Thanks. For all that will be, Yes.”<sup>4</sup> Because the Risen Christ shows us that nothing in all our human experience, not even death itself can keep us from the life-giving love of God.

Auntie Mame said, “Life is a banquet.” Jesus said, “Life’s just the appetizer.” Thanks be to God.

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