

Isaiah 65:17-25
Luke 24:1-12

Amazing
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Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem as his family heads home. When he is found three days later in the Temple, these are the words that they are saying about him, *“And all who heard him were amazed”* (Luke 2:47).

A man is brought to Jesus who has been paralyzed. The crowds are so great around the house that the men open a hole in the roof and lower the man down to Jesus. After being healed, the man picks up the mat and walks out the door, *“They were all amazed and glorified God saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this’”* (Mark 2:22).

Jesus returns back to his hometown of Nazareth and on the Sabbath goes to the Synagogue and teaches. The people respond, *“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth”* (Luke 4:22).

The Gadarene demonic has been healed and as he travels through his home region *“everyone was amazed”* (Mark 5:20).

Following the Transfiguration Jesus and three of his disciples return to the others and find then embroiled in controversy. There is a man with a son who has an evil spirit and they cannot heal him. After Jesus steps in and heals the young man the crowd responds, *“... everyone was amazed at what he was doing”* (Luke 9:42).

And from our text this morning (using the NRSV translation), *“...then he (Peter) went home, amazed at what had happened”* (Luke 24:12).

What amazes us today? What causes us to stand in awe? (Amaze: to overwhelm with surprise; astonish greatly; or to bewilder, to astound or dumbfound). The promise that we read from Isaiah is that our God is going to do a new thing. God is in the business of creating and recreating. Isaiah writes, *“Before they call I will answer, while we are speaking God will hear”* (65:24). The imagery is of the wolf and lamb, lion and ox eating, sleeping together. There is a coming peace for all creation. God is calling forth a new people, a new creation filled with peace, hope, grace, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Imagine the image Isaiah portrays. Enemies will become friends. God will be in the midst of a people, hearing them, answering them before they even speak. We long for such a kingdom. We work for such a kingdom. We pray for such a kingdom. This morning we prayed, *“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* This is for the fulfillment of the promise of Isaiah – God’s kingdom coming on earth.

The fulfillment of that promise began in Bethlehem. God is with us, *“...to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord”* (Luke 2:22). The old image of God is shattered in a stable in Bethlehem. A week ago this child born in Bethlehem rode into his city on the back of a donkey amid shouts of Hosanna. On Friday he was crucified on a Roman cross. His life ended as a criminal. The world would do all it could to silence him and yet today the news is that they did not/could not succeed. *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!”* (24:5b-6a NIV).

Peter has heard the news of the resurrection from the women who had gone to finish the job of burial they were unable to do on Friday. They found the empty tomb. It was a story he could not believe. He had rushed to the tomb and found it as they had described. The burial cloths were folded and empty. He does not know what to make of the stories. Something has happened, but what? He goes home, *“...amazed at what has happened.”*

How amazed are we at this story today? It still causes wonder and doubt, awe and disbelief. Thomas would not believe until he saw the Risen Christ with his own eyes, touch the wounds with his hands. The world still has its share of doubters. The recent Da Vinci

Code continues to raise doubts about the resurrection. It is just a story to keep a group in power. Do we stand amazed at the story of Easter?

Now, some people will believe almost anything else. The news this week told about the release of documents from Area 51. Some of those involved in the work during that period are now able to tell their stories. Still, there are those who will not believe their stories. They know there is still more to be told – UFO's! Some believe that the spirits of the long dead are being channeled through them. Others want to earn their way into heaven – grace is not a gift. And still others read astrological charts before starting their day, consult tarot cards or tea leaves to discover their future. They will believe someone's interpretation of the lines of their hand or the bumps on their head but not the message of the risen, resurrected Christ. Mention the resurrection and they will not believe.

Do we stand in awe today? Do we stand in what God has done and in what God is doing in the world – creating a new order? Paul sums it up better than I can in his first letter to the congregation in Corinth.

Now let me ask you something profound, yet troubling. If you became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as a resurrection? If there is no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it—if there is no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection.

If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we got out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.

(I Corinthians 15:12-20, The Message)

An English Anglican Bishop tells the story of speaking in Jamaica. In the front few rows of the congregation was a choir from a local African Episcopal Methodist Church. He opened his message as he always did with the phrase, "Christ is Risen." Immediately, as if on cue the entire choir stood and shouted, "Hallelujah! Christ is Risen Indeed." This was not the usual response he received from his English Anglican congregations. So, he said it again, "Christ is Risen!" And, again as if on cue the entire choir stood and shouted, "Hallelujah! Christ is Risen Indeed!"

Christ is Risen...

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quoted is from NRSV, NCCC/USA 1989
NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1989
Peterson, Eugene, The Message, Zondervan, 2004, 2006