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The Rev. Kate Byrd

This Changes Everything

It's a strange story we have today. I mean it's a familiar one, we all know it. We were there Friday as Jesus hung on the cross, and breathed his last. Saturday as he laid dead in the ultimate darkness of his tomb. And now today as we come to visit the grave of our Lord, just as the sun has begun to peek her sleepy head over the horizon, enough that we can see, but just barely. As we witness Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James, carefully, dutifully, and lovingly carrying the spices for anointing. As they wonder aloud, "who will roll away the stone for us?" That stone which just yesterday was sealed so tightly, in order that no one, not even Jesus' disciples, might tamper with his body. That stone, so immense and so obtrusive that it divides light from dark and life from death. No sooner do the words slip off the three women's lips, do they see the stone has been moved, Jesus their Lord is gone, and the tomb is empty!

This changes everything! It changes the three women's plans for their day, their convictions surrounding the sanctity of a grave, even their understanding of what happens to a person when they die and are laid to rest. This changes everything. And, while they are still in the midst of the shock and awe of it all, they hear a man say, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here... [So] Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

This changes EVERYTHING!

I remember the day I found out we were pregnant with twins. Of course I knew we were pregnant, but when the wand of the doctor's ultrasound machine revealed those two tiny sacs, I knew THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING. And yet, it changed nothing at all, I was still pregnant, I was still (God willing) going to bring life into the world. Yes, the discovery of twins changed everything and yet it changed nothing at all, they were always there whether I had known it or not, a birth would occur whether it involved one newborn or two. And, isn't that how it is with life?! As children we go off to school, leaving the sight and care of our parents for hours on end, and THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING, and yet, it changes nothing at all. We are still their children, they will still worry, care, and love us, we will still go home to their embrace each and everyday. As young adults we move out, and go to college, or our first job, and THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING, and yet, it changes nothing at all. Someone will still wait by the phone for a call to know we're ok, or maybe write us a check to help pay for our needs, or keep our bed made just in case we have the need. As adults we get married, we change jobs, we move across the country, we have children, and THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING, and yet it changes nothing at all. We are still the same people, even if our hair has grayed from stress and age, or our bodies changed from bearing the weight of the world or our children or even our partners. As we grow older, we gain wisdom and insight from all our years, we watch babies be born, and friends pass away, we witness tragedies in the world, and experience victories in our life, and again and again THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING and yet it changes nothing at all. The world keeps turning, the days keep passing and so it goes.

It's a strange story we have this morning, maybe because it is such a familiar one, filled with all the emotions that encompass life. Maybe more so, it's a strange story because, on this Easter Sunday, what really want is something of the miraculous and spectacular, something of joy and celebration. Not three women shocked and bewildered, "who flee from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them" as Mark tells us. I mean where's the risen Christ, the one we encounter in our other three other Gospel's? Mark began his whole story with "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Is this really how he is going to end it?

I have to tell you, I actually really love Mark's version of Resurrection, because it reveals the mystery of the resurrection. Which is that it changes everything and nothing at all, because it is not the conclusion! It's simply the most beautiful invitation in all of history!

This Easter I invite you to consider what it means for resurrection to change everything about our lives and nothing at all. Because it is the miraculous that allowed a man who was dead To get up and out of the grave, and allowed God, the Divine creator, to live and die and rise again, and even allows the Spirit to make it all possible then and there, here and now, forever and always! And yet, it changes nothing at all because this is how God has been enacting in the world from the very beginning, always finding ways to draw humanity back to God's self, and God's grace, and God's love! And so, I pray we might find the miraculous miracle of the resurrection in the mundane spaces of our everyday lives! As we witness the beauty of the blooms bursting forth from a barren earth and sprouting out of empty branches. As we hear the sweet giggle of a new born child or the excited chatter of seasoned friends. As we embrace a loved whom we've waited to hold for oh so long or maybe even since just this morning. As we breath deep those familiar scents that remind us we are home in place that's familiar and comforting. And, as we taste that meal which Jesus instituted oh so long ago and that we still partake of here and now, there and everywhere! This Easter my friends as we exclaim Alleluia may we remember we are people of resurrection because we are an Easter people, and this changes everything as we celebrate Jesus' victory from the empty tomb, and it changes nothing because God's life and love is rising all around us yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And for this we join in the glory of the resurrection as we exclaim, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!