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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
Easter Sunday/Year C
April 21, 2019
Text: Luke 24:1-12

“The Women and Us”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

None of the women had really gotten any sleep over the last couple of days. It was too hard for them to close their eyes after what they had seen. It was now the third day and the first day of the week. Still it was time to get up and face the day even though the sun had yet to show itself.

Mary Magdalene was the most anxious of them all. The Lord had touched her life in a profound way that even she herself could not fully describe. She loved Jesus dearly and now he was gone. His body lie in a tomb that wasn't even his own. He did not deserve what he got. He did not deserve to die like a thief, like a criminal. He was not like that at all. He was kind and gentle, assertive when he needed to be but he did not deserve to die like that.

It seemed like only hours ago that she and the other women were celebrating the Passover meal with Jesus and the other disciples. There was laughing and singing and prayers and the retelling of the old, old story. Then the mood turned noticeably somber. She saw how Jesus and Judas had exchanged glances during the meal. And Jesus had spoken strangely as he parceled out the bread. “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me,” he said. He said similar words as he passed the cup, only this time he spoke of blood and again said, “Remember me.” It did not make sense then or even now.

Mary hurriedly slipped on her other sandal and saw his face again. She stood frozen for a moment but then quickly came to herself and reached for her jar of spices and then scurried out the door.

Though it was early, it was late. Mary was to meet up with Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and a few of the other women at the fork of the road where three trees had grown close together. They found one another though their

greeting wasn't as joyous as it usually was. They were barely putting one foot in front of the other.

It could have been the hour but they had all witnessed the same thing. They saw Jesus being bound and dragged away from the Mount of Olives. They saw him as he carried his cross through the streets and along the outside wall of the city. They each wanted to scream as the soldiers stripped him of his clothing. Could they have not have left him with one ounce of dignity? They clung to one another as the soldiers drove the nails into his hands and feet. Mary wanted to soothe Jesus' mother but it took everything in herself to stand upright and not fall apart. When they took his body down, they all wept and wailed but then realized that they needed to work quickly before the sun went down. They did not have a chance to finish applying the spices but resolved to meet the morning after the Sabbath to finish what had been started. They knew where his tomb was.

Now quietly the women made their way. There was not much of conversation between them. How would they manage to move the stone away?

But when they got there the stone had already been rolled away! Who would have done this? And where was the body of their Lord? Had his tomb been robbed like so many others?

Suddenly there were voices. "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen." Remember what he said to you.

The sun had not shown as yet on the first day of the week but in the darkness there was light.

Mary, Joanna, Mary and the other women came expecting to finish a task, a task no sane person would ever want to do but had to do when a death of a loved occurred. The body of the dead needed to be honored, to be anointed, but in this case there was no body to tend to. They had not found death. Good Friday had moved on.

They ran to tell the men. Fear propelled them and excitement too. Would they be believed? Women in early Palestine were so often ignored. Theirs was an "idle tale" not to be taken seriously, so said the men. No matter for they knew what they had seen and heard was true. The living was not among the dead. Jesus had been risen!

While the sun had not yet risen the women had encountered resurrection! They had experienced it all: Jesus' teachings, the healings, the feedings...the betrayal, the arrest, the crucifixion, a stone removed, two men in dazzling clothes, a message, and an empty tomb.

If it had not been for the witness of these women, would Easter be the same? No slam against the men but the apostles did not believe them at first. And Peter did not know what he saw!

We often come to the empty tomb ourselves. We sometimes come empty, alone, and afraid. We ponder. We question. We struggle. We feel hopeless. Lifeless. We come expecting little or nothing. We know what we expect to see-more of the same-forgetting that God willingly rolls back the stones that hinder us. And God comes to us, calling out and sometimes whispering, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" And why? Because our God is a God of surprises. Our God is a God of hope. Our God is a God of life.

Sisters and brothers, what is *our* testimony this Easter morning? What makes our Alleluias ring true? Have *we* not seen and have *we* not heard the words that rock our world: *He is not here. He is risen!* Are we not witnesses of Christ's resurrection? We see him with eyes of faith. We see him in the faces of others and throughout all of creation. We listen to his Word and eat and drink with him at the Table. This is not an idle tale. This is Good News worth repeating!

As it has been said again and again-Resurrection has no meaning if we do not share the Good News of Easter in our Good Friday kind of world! So go and tell somebody:

*God sent His Son. They called Him Jesus: He came to love,
Heal and forgive; He lived and died to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.
Because He lives (We) can face tomorrow;
Because He lives all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.*

Happy Easter!

Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!