

**Easter Sunday
April 5, 2015**

Easter is coming! Isn't that a great word of hope?
Raise your hand if you've ever gone through a rough time in your own life when you've needed to hear these words. Maybe that time is even this morning?

When we are standing in the middle of one of those times, one of the tombs of life, we need to hear the Good News: Easter is Coming!

Just this past year, right here in our own congregation we have experienced many of the tombs of life

- the death of a loved one
- the loss of employment
- struggles with friendships or relationships
- strained marriages
- conflicts between parents and teenagers
- serious illnesses and hospitalizations

The list could go on and on, but into each of these situations, God has a word of Resurrection hope. Easter is coming and Easter is already here!

Luke tells us that:

“On the first day of the week, at early dawn,
the women came to the tomb, taking spices that they had prepared.”

But instead of death, they found that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. Luke tells us they were perplexed, they didn't understand. What did this mean? How could an empty tomb change anything?

But suddenly two angels appeared to them and said:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

And honestly, don't we sometimes do the same thing?

When we are going through the rough times in our lives often instead of looking to Jesus - the risen Christ sometimes we look to other things to cope with our stress.

We turn to food or alcohol, or other distractions.
Or, we pull away from other people.
Or, we pull away from our church, or stop praying or reading our Bible.

But do you remember what the angels told the women?

“He is not here, he has risen!”

And the angels brought to their minds what Jesus had said to them:

“Remember how he told you, that while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Then, they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all of this to the eleven and to all the rest.” Luke 24:6-9

Do you remember how the disciples responded at first?
Luke tells that to the disciples these words seemed like an idle tale.
They sounded too good to be true.
They sounded, like wishful thinking.

But do you remember what happened next?

God stirred Peter and John, and they ran to the tomb to see for themselves.

God’s resurrection hope was breaking in.
God’s reign was breaking in.
Easter was coming, and Easter was already there.

If you are sitting there this morning and this story seems too good to be true, if it sounds like wishful thinking, I’ve got Good News for you.

God’s reign, God’s wonderful, gracious kingdom is breaking into your life too. just like it began to stir with Peter and John.

And God is inviting you to run and see for yourself.

And one of the best places to look, is through the eyes of others who have seen this resurrection.
People like Jared Witt.



Jared was a student at Trinity Lutheran Seminary and he was on a seminary trip to Haiti - at the time of the big earthquake and survived.

But the story I want to share with you happened on his first trip to Haiti two years before that.

He was visiting a school for orphans called Trinity House and this is what he writes:

In seminary we use a lot of words — words about God. But it would be difficult for me to explain with mere words why I need [Haiti](#) in order to really know God.

Two years ago, on my first visit to [Trinity House](#)

I was watching a pickup basketball game that the boys were playing one afternoon and found myself struck dumb with what I saw.

One of the younger boys, Dadzi, is blind, and every couple minutes or so the others (all pre- and early teen boys, mind you) would halt the game for a moment, hand the ball to Dadzi, direct him to the hoop, and allow him to shoot, after which he would laugh uncontrollably. I watched this go on for about 15 minutes, until finally, I found it unbearable not to join the game myself.

Often in Haiti kids play soccer, a sport way out of my comfort zone, so if I get invited to play, it's solely for the sake of laughter. But because I've been a few times around a basketball court, they joyfully welcomed my intrusion, and the match-ups quickly deteriorated until an even five on five became 10 Haitian kids versus one large *blanc* (a Creole word meaning "white," "foreign," or generally awkward looking).

At one point the game stopped, as it normally did for Dadzi, but instead of just handing the ball to Dadzi, the others started motioning for me to do something. Eventually, I figured out that they were wanting me to lift Dadzi onto my shoulder so he could dunk the ball. I did, he did, and this became the new ritual until a bell rang and the boys had to run inside for dinner.

Before leaving the court, though, I felt two little arms wrap themselves around my waist, and I looked down to see that it was Dadzi,



giving me one last hug before dinner. Then an older boy gently grabbed his hand and directed him indoors.

I'd played many, many basketball games in my lifetime. I'd won some. I'd lost a bunch. But never before had I cried after one. At first I was puzzled by my tears. I certainly wasn't crying because I was sad; in fact I'd never felt a joy so deep in all my life.

I guess I was only reacting the one truly rational way that one can react when one has just experienced the overpowering, wonder of the reign of God up close.

Do you want to experience the reign, and wonder and power of God up close.
Look to the empty tomb and the angels words, "He is not dead, he has risen,"
and the witness of the women
and Peter's faith and John's faith.

Look to Jesus, who love breaks through into our lives
and brings life out of death
and light out of darkness.
and hope right now in the midst of anything, anything you are facing.

Easter is already here! Amen.