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"He Arose"

Isaiah 25:6-9 Mark 16:1-8 I Corinthians 15:1-11

#### INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 25:6-9

The prophet Isaiah looked to a time when the Lord would call all people to a grand feast. The cloud of sorrow and trouble and death will vanish so that all tears shall give way to laughter and joy. Hear the word of the Lord from Isaiah 25:6-9

#### INTRODUCTION TO MARK 16:1-8

When it comes to the story of Jesus' birth, we only have one gospel account, from Luke. When it comes to the story of Jesus death, burial and rebirth as our resurrected Lord, all four gospels tell that story. This morning we will read the story of what happened on Resurrection morning from the point of view of Mark's gospel. Whichever gospel you read Christ's resurrection conveys the same message: the tomb is empty! The stone of that tomb that closed the grave is no longer needed. Jesus Christ is Risen! (He is Risen indeed!) Let's listen to Mark's account of that story! Verses 1-8.

Let's pray. Lord, we are in awe of what actually happened that morning so long ago. It is hard for us to imagine what went on in the minds and hearts and spirits of these three women. As we search for how your resurrection affects us, as we meditate on this account of the most dramatic morning of all of history, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

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One Sunday morning a group of five year olds were gathered in a Sunday school class in Chattanooga. The teacher looked at the class and asked this question: "Does anyone know what today is?" A little girl held up her hand and said, "Yes, today is Palm Sunday." The teacher exclaimed, "That's fantastic, that's wonderful. Now does anyone know what next Sunday is?" The same little girl held up her hand and said, "Yes, next Sunday is Easter Sunday." Once again the teacher said, "That's fantastic. Now, does anyone know what makes next Sunday Easter?" The same little girl responded and said, "Yes, next Sunday is Easter because Jesus rose from the grave" and before the teacher could congratulate her, she kept on talking and said, "But if he sees his shadow -- he has to go back in for seven weeks."

O.K. that's my joke of the day for April Fools. From now on I'm going to be serious. O.K?

In my family I have a particular assignment. I am "Cardman." I am responsible for picking out greeting cards for special occasions that are appropriate to each person in the family. It's a challenge I take on seriously, but joyfully, every

Christmas. When it comes to Christmas Cards there are aisles of cards. When it comes to Easter cards though, it's a challenge. There was only one 4 foot wide section right next to the cards for Administrative Assistant Appreciation Day-- which by the way is April 25. There were a lot of cards with eggs and rabbits and baby chicks and baby ducks. There were no groundhogs. There were a couple with a cross, but that's a card for Good Friday

I finally managed to find one card that did mention what should be the primary focus of our gathering this morning. It quotes the first two words of the chorus of the first hymn we sang this morning. It says, "HE AROSE!"

Some years ago for a few hours a family in Japan had their lives turned upside down. It began with a traffic accident in which a man died. The police arrived on the scene and examined the body. The victim was badly disfigured but several of the witnesses thought they knew the car and identified the victim as a 60-year-old local shipbuilder.

Police contacted this man's family and a brother-in-law came to officially identify the body. "Yes," he said, "That's him. That's my brother-in-law." Then he went home to break the sad news to the rest of his family. They in turn quickly spread the news to other family members who promptly gathered at the home of the widow. As you might imagine this was a scene of deep mourning. Family members embraced one another, shared remembrances, and made funeral plans.

Suddenly, in the midst of their time of grieving, the front door opened and in walked the 60-year-old shipbuilder who was thought to be dead. This poor unsuspecting man had come home from a hard day's work and was wondering why all the relatives had gathered at his house. Had he forgotten some special occasion?

Can you imagine the celebration those family members had at his appearance? Think of the joy in their hearts as they phoned the police to tell them to start their identification process all over again, because the one they thought was dead had just walked into their living room. HE ARRIVED!

When Jesus was pronounced dead his small band of believers would have been thrilled if his had been a case of mistaken identity. Nobody they knew had ever been resurrected from the dead. Lazarus had been resuscitated but he would one day have another funeral after which his body would stay put. .

Of course there are many people today who have difficulty believing in the resurrection. They may not confuse it with Groundhog Day, but there are many people cannot allow themselves to believe it is true.

There is a Gathering every Sunday morning in Houston called Oasis. Like us they have musicians and service projects and coffee. They are nice people doing good things. I enjoyed it the time I went, which is how I know about what is

happening there this morning because I'm still on their mailing list. Instead of a sermon they have a Main Talk. Today's speaker is Tim Sledge who will be presenting the Main Talk: entitled, "Goodbye Jesus--A Preacher's Journey Beyond Faith." Tim is a former Southern Baptist minister and long-time author who will share his compelling personal story of leaving his faith and finding new ways to live a positive, value-driven life.

When faced with the concept of Jesus' resurrection Scott Hoezee writes that we have at least three options

"First, you can be agnostic and cynical by saying that you don't know what to make of this but then neither are you going to try.

Second, you can choose to deny it. You can say that the whole thing is fiction, fantasy, a pious wish but something that never really happened.

Third, you can, slowly perhaps, assimilate this new information and move past the shock toward acceptance."

Hoezee continues, "The problem for most of us is that we are not surprised enough by Easter to realize we face a choice. Easter has become a part of the background scenery of our lives. We've never been bewildered by Easter. Believing that Jesus rose again from the dead becomes a little like believing the earth is round and that it orbits the sun.

There was a time when people didn't believe that though. They thought the earth was flat and that the sun orbited the earth. It caused quite a stir when this view had to be revised." 1

Last Saturday "Mad" Mike Hughes, at the age of 61, ascended 1,875 feet in his crowd-funded steam powered rocket that he built himself. He came crashing back to Earth in the Mojave Desert outside Amboy, California. Hughes' rocket hit estimated speeds of 350 mph before he pulled his parachute. He had to deploy a second parachute to keep from hitting the ground too hard. He did it to prove his belief that the earth is flat-shaped like a Frisbee. A Frisbee has rounded edges and I guess he thought that accounts for the curvature at the edge of the flat earth. (I guess he'd be the first Frisbeeerian) April Fools!

Apart from a sore back and dinged-up rocket, Mad Mike Hughes told the Associated Press he was fine. Mad Mike believed. He was willing to put his life on the line to prove it. But what he believed was not backed up by factual evidence.

There are some facts that are incontrovertible that we can measure. There are some facts that we have to take someone else's word for it. There was a day when someone took someone's word that the world was not flat.

Charles Colson, who was convicted and sent to prison for his role in the Watergate conspiracy came to this conclusion: He said, "I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me." How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, and then they proclaimed the truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world—and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? It's absolutely impossible."

John R. W. Stott encourages us to ask what we would have seen if we had been there the morning that Jesus arose. He wrote,

"Now supposing we had been present in the tomb when Jesus rose from the dead, what would we have seen?" Would we have seen Him twitch, move, stretch and stand up? No. Jesus did not recover from a swoon. His was a resurrection. Jesus passed miraculously through death into an altogether new sphere of existence.

When Peter and John got to the empty tomb John saw that the body of Jesus had ... changed, vaporized, transmuted into something new different and wonderful. It had passed through grave clothes, as it was later to pass through closed doors, leaving them untouched and almost undisturbed--almost, but not quite. The body clothes, once the support of the body had been removed, would have subsided or collapsed, and would now be lying flat.

Jesus' resurrection body has its whole molecular structure changed. The body of the resurrected Jesus passed through space and matter without friction and without disability or difficulty" 2

When Jesus resuscitated Lazarus, Lazarus hobbled out like something from the Walking Dead. Lazarus had to have someone come to unwrap him. When Jesus rose, he rose through his wrappings into a new kind of body—a Resurrection Body.

With every breath we take, someone is dying somewhere in the world. With our 24 hour news cycle we are inundated with reports of where death continues to strike by the minute. Yet we are drawn here this morning to celebrate the defeat of death through Jesus' resurrection. With his resurrection Jesus robbed the grave of its final victory and stole away death's sting.

This morning, as we gather to celebrate Christ's resurrection my heart goes out to Westminster Presbyterian Church in Odessa, Texas. In 2010 I was called to serve there as their Interim Pastor. It was my first time to serve as an interim. The pastor they called when I left was there for until 2013. The interim pastor they called after him was installed as their pastor, this last January. This past Tuesday he was killed in a car accident. Tragically, their case was not a case of

mistaken identity. Their loved one and their beloved pastor was gone-gone from them, at home with the Lord. This morning as they gather to celebrate Christ's resurrection at the same time they celebrate the hope of the resurrection to new life of their pastor, the Rev. Buddy Lee Monahan.

How do we, as members of this community of Christ, this church of the risen Lord, celebrate that HE AROSE? How do we get all those who are fearful and unbelieving who huddle in some hidden room out of their tombs of fear?

The angel inside Jesus' empty tomb tells us how. By boldly stepping out into the world and taking up the earthly ministry of Jesus where he left off.

How do WE do it? First, by believing those who witnessed Christ' Resurrection first hand and passed on their experience to the point that from those first few there are now 2 billion followers of Jesus in the world.

How do WE do it? By believing what happened was something that changed the disciple's way of thinking as radically as having to adjust to the new knowledge that the world is not flat but is indeed round.

We do it by giving of our time and our effort to the many ministries we support. We do it by giving to One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. We do it by running and walking in Relays for Life (HOLD UP PURPLE SURVIVOR RIBBON) ... this coming Friday Night.

We do it by spending hours rehearsing special music to present in worship at a Thursday night service that ended in the darkness of a Good Friday and culminated in inspiring us all to raise our hopes This Easter Sunday morning.

We do it by taking our turn to staff the Church Women United Thrift Store this month. We do it by gathering to hear more than a Main Talk of a former "Preacher's "Move Beyond Faith" to a positive, value-driven life. We gather to hear this "Preacher's Move to Share the Faith beyond Faith.... Presbyterian Church," about a positive, eternally-driven life.

Jesus' case was not a case of mistaken identity like that of the 60 year old Japanese shipbuilder. It was not a case of Jesus recovering from a swoon. It was not a case of someone stealing his body to perpetrate a hoax or cover up a lie for which they would to a man suffer and die. It was not a case of resuscitation like Lazarus. It certainly has more to do with new life than what is symbolized by eggs or rabbits or baby chicks or baby ducks or even prophesying groundhogs prognosticating the Estimated Time of Arrival of Spring.

If Easter says anything at all to us it is that Jesus will always be with us. The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian kings. Westminster Abbey in London is renowned, because in it rests the bodies of English nobles and notables. Mohammed's tomb is noted for the stone coffin and the bones it contains. Arlington cemetery in Washington, D.C., is revered, for it is the honored resting place of many outstanding Americans. The tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty! HE AROSE!

Let's pray. We give you thanks that, because he lived, died and rose again, we have gained a vision of your kingdom. Because he stooped to minister to the least of your people, we too have hope that can lift our spirits out of despair. Since he taught us how to love our neighbor, dividing walls of hostility may no longer keep us apart. We give you thanks that through Christ your law is written within us. No longer can we claim that you hide yourself from us. As we seek to serve others, your Holy Spirit is with us. When we face troubled times, you are the source of our comfort and strength. Christ calls us and teaches us what it means to follow your will for us; in our search for maturity, your wisdom prevails. We give you thanks that all our days can now be lived with assurance with confidence that in Christ we may dwell in your favor. Remove all hesitation as we step out in faith. Fill us with hope as we celebrate Christ's resurrection.

### 1 Scott Hoezee, Comments and Observations

### 2 John Stott

Easter thoughts 1973 –by Darrell Cluck

God borrowed a body to become one of us.

On a borrowed beast he rode  
 To a borrowed room where he broke  
 The borrowed bread and served  
 The borrowed wine,  
     borrowing condemnation from ones  
 On borrowed time.

                                    He bowed his head  
 And borrowed death.

                                    They wrapped him in  
     in borrowed linens and placed him  
 in a borrowed tomb....  
                                     The loan was paid in three days.

He was alive! The tomb intact.  
 He was alive, busy paying back  
                                     His debts.

To the beast he gave the dignity of usefulness  
 To the room immortal fame.  
 To the bread a new purpose  
 To the wine a new design.  
 To the linens he gave the glow of glory  
 To the ones condemned another chance  
 To the tomb he gave a song of triumph  
     to death, a dance