

**Texts: Isaiah 65:27-25; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12**

**What did you expect, Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and all you other women? You, too, you folks who have gathered here? What did you expect when you came to the tomb this morning?**

**You probably expected that you would have to find some men, soldiers maybe, to roll away the stone from in front of the tomb. You expected to find Jesus' body, cold, grey and lifeless. You expected the smell of decomposition.**

**You hadn't expected any of it to happen so fast, did you? You and the other disciples, you had followed Jesus everywhere. You had seen him heal people. You had seen him cast out evil spirits. You had seen him feed 5,000 people with just the few loaves and fish that you had brought along that day. You had listened to his parables about a new way that God works here on earth – a kingdom of heaven he called it. You had experienced his compassion, his welcome, his forgiveness.**

**You had marched into Jerusalem with him. But in a matter of days the crowds that had shouted "Hosanna!" began shouting "Crucify him!" You certainly hadn't expected that. It has only been two full days since he was put to death, but already all those other things seem like a lifetime ago. You hadn't expected this level of grief, of despair.**

**So what *did* you expect when you got here? Certainly not an open and empty tomb. Certainly not those two angels who suddenly stood beside you – so dazzling that you couldn't even look at them, and you found yourself flat on the ground in terror. And what they said to you was the most unexpected news of all. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" they asked. What? Living? Dead? What are you talking about?**

**Why do you seek the living among the dead?**

**Tombs are just that – places where you find death. And tombs can be places where death takes a lot of forms. A tomb can be a place where you live in the past, thinking that by looking backward to what used to be, you can hold off the unknown future. A tomb can be a place where you cling to the status quo, because that’s the way that things have always been. A tomb can be a place where you sort other people out, and decide that some are worthy of your notice and others not so much. A tomb can be a place of addiction, ignorance, bullying, anger. A tomb can be a place where violence is used to solve every problem. A tomb can be a place where you accept conflict and war and hatred and abuse as normal, because you don’t think anything can really change.**

**A tomb is a place where death rules, death is in control, death has the final word.**

**What else did you expect, here at the tomb?**

**Why do you seek the living among the dead?**

**He is not here. He has risen.**

**The angels are not talking about resuscitation. They are not talking about reincarnation. They are not talking about ghosts or vampires or zombies, the walking dead. This news, this good news about Jesus – this is about life. This is God destroying death and all the ways that we live as if we were dying. This is God creating a new heavens and a new earth. This is God taking death and making life out of it.**

**This is resurrection.**

**In the words of Rob Bell, resurrection announces that God has not given up on this world. God has not thrown in the towel. Resurrection announces that this world matters to God, and that God does not intend to destroy it but to redeem it. Resurrection announces that what you do with your life matters, because you have been made alive in**

**Christ. Resurrection announces that war and abuse and violence and greed and hatred are not the normal state of the world. All those powers will be overcome, destroyed.**

**Resurrection announces that God came into the world to invite you to live among the living, not among the dead.**

**Resurrection announces that when you are at your lowest point, when all there seems to be is pain and grief and hopelessness, that God will step in and tear that blackness open. God steps in and shows you the light dawning on a new day, a new creation. Jesus is risen and that fact changes everything.**

**Resurrection is not some misty ideal, it is not some long-ago story that is unconnected to the world you live in here and now. Resurrection is the invitation to live your life as Jesus lived. To share meals with those who are not like you. To offer healing and compassion to those who suffer. To challenge those who hold power to use it justly. To love the people that you ordinarily would call your enemies. To forgive. To reconcile. To pray. To turn the other cheek. To give away both your cloak and your coat.**

**Resurrection is an invitation to open your life up to God's ways, which are not your ways. To live in a world of endless, unexpected possibility. To know the life-giving, upside-down-turning love that raises you from death to life.**

**Why do you seek the living among the dead? Jesus is not in the tomb where you expected to find him. He has risen. And from now on you will find him where you least expect.**

**Alleluia! Christ has risen. He has risen indeed! Alleluia.**