

**A Sermon from the Episcopal Parish of  
St. John the Evangelist in Hingham, Massachusetts**  
*Preached by the Rev. Timothy E. Schenck on April 4, 2010 (Easter Day)*

They didn't believe them. The apostles did not believe the three women who had returned from the empty tomb proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. The women had brought along spices to prepare Jesus' body for burial; and the apostles probably thought they'd been sniffing them along the way. Luke's gospel tells us the apostles dismissed their report as an "idle tale." This coming from a bunch of fishermen who, presumably, knew their way around a tall tale. "Yeah, that fish we caught in the Sea of Galilee was about *this* big." And there may have been just a touch of cultural chauvinism at work. "You know how emotionally delusional women can be."

But I also think the apostles didn't want to get their hopes up. We all do this at times – setting up emotional barriers to protect ourselves from potential disappointment. And, not to brag, but men are really good at this. But in fairness the apostles, along with the women who followed Jesus, had been through a lot. The very meaning of their lives had been crucified along with their Lord, their teacher, their friend. Their hopes and dreams, along with Jesus, had been strung up on a cross to die. It wasn't supposed to turn out this way. They had big plans here; they were going to change the world. Well, Jesus was, but they were in the inner circle; they were hitching their wagons to his star, expecting a great ride. And suddenly it was all gone. They were grieving, they were confused, they were depressed, they were devastated. Into this emotional anguish the women arrive from the tomb breathlessly proclaiming Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And the apostles didn't believe them.

Now, you can't really blame them. Well, maybe for the chauvinism. But, first of all, the whole notion was absurd. Rising from the dead? Puh-lease. Angels in dazzling white? O-kay.

The Easter miracle defies all logic. But that's what miracles do. They defy logic while often bringing us to an even deeper truth. And the deeper truth of the resurrection is that death no longer has dominion over us. Because Christ conquered death and the grave we who believe are granted eternal life in him. The barrier between life and death has been shattered -- which means that whether we live or die, we are alive in Christ. That is the Good News of the resurrection.

And Peter is the first of the apostles to recognize this. With hope in his heart he sprints out toward the empty tomb. And that's really what we should do on Easter Day – sprint to the empty tomb to be dazzled; rush out to meet our risen Lord. I saw just a touch of this after the 9:15 service this morning. Hundreds of kids sprinting out to the post-service Easter Egg hunt. Through the resurrection, Jesus Christ may have trampled down death but I was worried about getting trampled myself!

So what Peter discovered and what we *rediscover* every Easter is that the resurrection isn't just wishful thinking. It is the discovery that changes the world. The miracle of Easter unlocks for us the very meaning of life, which is simply this: to worship God and to love one another as Christ

loves us. We no longer have to stumble around in fear and confusion. We are free to live fully the lives of joy God so deeply desires for each one of us.

Now, from this side of the resurrection, we already know the truth; we already know how this story will unfold. We can sit back and snicker at the apostles' lack of faith because the mystery has already been revealed to us. But even still, the journey from death to resurrection never fails to capture our imagination. It is our story, it is our journey, it is our victory. In just a few days, the cross has been transformed from an implement of execution into an instrument of salvation. The cross is multi-dimensional and we've seen it from every angle this past week. We've seen its agony; its pain; its suffering; its death. And now we gaze upon its glory; its wonder; its hope; its salvation. That's the Easter perspective – we see the cross in its totality. And that's the view we're offered on this Easter Day. That's the hope and the power and the glory of the resurrection.

On Easter, God does some amazing things. Through Jesus Christ, God gives fulfillment and meaning to emptiness. God gives hope and joy to despair. God gives resurrection and life to death. May this Easter season fill you with the joy of Christ. May you remain open to seeing the wonders of God's presence in the world. And may you live life with the blessed assurance that the very gates of heaven await. Alleluia and amen.