



'Resurrection Days'

Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Day
8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 am, Sunday, March 27, 2016
The Reverend Nancy R. Easton
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

[1 Corinthians 15:19-26](#); [Luke 24:1-12](#)

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Blizzard of 2016 was over, and on that Sunday morning, the sun shone brilliantly. The calm after the storm, right? Randy and I began the hard task of unearthing cars, creating a sidewalk path, and opening up enough space at the end of the driveway to get a vehicle out in an emergency. Now, since we didn't have a blower, our shovels and middle-aged muscles had to suffice. That meant we couldn't fling the snow very far. So it was inevitable that several feet of shoveled snow would have to rest upon the azalea bushes bordering the driveway. There simply was nowhere else to put it. We had to console ourselves with the thought that a gentle blanket of snow might insulate the azaleas and they would survive.

But this was no gentle blanket of snow. It might as well have been a two-ton weight on those delicate branches, and only seeming to increase in heaviness as it compressed in the days that followed.

I didn't have great expectations about the outcome. I expected the worst, seeing as only a year earlier these same azaleas suffered from a blight. Surely they were too fragile to make it to spring. And so throughout our strangely-warm winter I waited to see my doomsday expectations fulfilled.

Think of those women walking toward the tomb that Easter morning. They have their expectations, and we know what those expectations are. They expect to find Jesus' lifeless body. That's why they bring with them fragrant spices—to prepare him for final burial. They witnessed Jesus' crucifixion. They witnessed his broken body placed in that temporary tomb. They expect to see death.

I don't suppose this was an easy task for the women. After all, their hearts have been crushed by the past few days' events. Their beloved teacher and Lord suffered and died. A heaviness of grief and despair now weighs down on them, like that snow on my azaleas. But in that culture it was a woman's duty to prepare bodies for burial. And, strange, for all the challenge that it would be, the women also consider it a final act of devotion. So they come to the tomb, expecting to see death, knowing full well that grieving days lay ahead.

They come with expectations, and resurrection isn't one of them. Jesus predicted out loud that he would be raised from the dead—predicted it more than once, in fact, but no one really expected his resurrection. Or could quite believe it even when an empty tomb stared them in the face. Pastor David Lose is right to declare this: "...if you don't find

resurrection at least a little hard to believe, you probably aren't taking it very seriously!" Because, says Lose, those of us who simply accept the resurrection as part of our faith hardly think about the sheer surprise of it all, the totally unexpected event that it was. And therefore we don't recognize its enormous implications for our lives and this world. We don't see how the Day of Resurrection leads us into Resurrection Days. Maybe we need to start thinking about it and taking it seriously.

Those here who do struggle with the idea of the resurrection? Well, you probably have it right—at least you admit how Resurrection defies understanding, how it doesn't fit into our neatly ordered and predictable world. You're willing to look the whole notion in the eye and actually wrestle with it, as opposed to those of us who simply accept Resurrection without thinking what that really means.

And this is what it means: Resurrection is this totally surprising, unexpected event where God shakes creation with an entirely new reality. The old reality? We know it well, living smack-dab in it. The old reality is our human expectation that death always has the last word. We've seen it and experienced it. We've railed at death's grip on our loved ones. We've wept at their graves. We've had our hearts crushed, the heaviness of grief and despair weighing down on us, like that snow on my azalea bushes. Yet we insist that expectation holds true and thus determines the future.

But this Resurrection Day has something to say about that expectation. For what the women discover at the door of the tomb is that death's power has been overthrown. Apparently there is something more that God has in store for each of us—both in this life and beyond our death. The Risen Jesus just happens to be the first fruits of it all, the first evidence of God's surprising, unpredictable, creative love. What follows is the overthrowing of our expectations. And not just about death—which now we realize is not the end. But also our expectations about how the world works—turns out this world's hatred and brutality are no match for perfect love made visible on a cross. And our expectations about how we'll get ahead in life—turns out God's newly created community, the Church, will bear witness to how people can share so there is abundance for all. Yes, the days ahead of us are Resurrection Days, where we can take seriously what this particular Resurrection Day is all about, a new reality we can live out.

The snow has long since melted off my azalea bushes. They look a little ragged, as though they've been through a great battle. They have. But there is new life—little green buds are showing. Resurrection Days have begun. **Alleluia and Amen.**

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