

Texts: Isaiah 25: 6-9; Luke 24:1-12

Subject: The Resurrection

Theme: Re-Membered

Easter Sunday, Apr. 4, 2021; Reformation Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Grace and peace to you from God our Father in heaven and our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

When I was about eight years old, it was the golden age of Saturday morning television. We had all the best cartoons: Masters of the Universe, GI:Joe, the Transformers, and more. The stories were fantastic, the characters larger than life, and the colors vibrant and fun. One of the great old shows that all my friends and I loved, was Voltron: Defender of the Universe. If you are uninitiated, Voltron was a giant robot made up of robotic lions that protected the universe from evil space villains. Now you understand everything. No? Well each robot space lion formed a member of the body of the giant robot Voltron. Each was a different color: the red and green lions formed the arms, the blue and yellow lions formed the legs, and the black lion formed the torso and head. Perfect for merchandising and marketing. Of course, the toys came first, and then the stories - but the stories taught us important insights too: Good triumphs over evil, the world is bigger than we can imagine, and the importance of working together. You can't form an giant outer space robot with only 4 lions, everyone knows that. If the concept seems a bit unbelievable, well - that was the point. These shows were an escape from the every day, an exciting alternate world in which we imagined ourselves to be heroes, with powers to save the universe.

As we grew up, we learned life was a bit different. Sometimes it seemed like evil was winning. The world we experienced could seem small and limiting. And teamwork was harder to come by. If we imagined ourselves powerful by any stretch, the world

would have a way of setting us straight. As the 80's turned to the 90's we saw economic recession, police brutality and riots in L.A., the first war in Iraq, and more. Saturday mornings aren't the same anymore. Cartoons have changed. Everything has. The world we live in can seem even more fractured, and people more isolated from one another, even though we are more connected than any other time in history. Many of us feel uneasy and can be untrusting. Can we remember what it was like to feel joy; to imagine a better future; to be inspired?

Jesus' friends knew what it was like to be disappointed. They had walked with Him in His ministry. They heard the promises he made, witnessed the miraculous healings, fed thousands by His side, and were fed and washed by His own hands. Then they saw him killed. Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Peter and ten others didn't stick together - they walked away from Him. He was nailed to a cross and publicly executed. The women stayed and watched and wept. All their hope was gone. Death was all around. They could not see any triumph.

But that first day of the week, just after His body had been laid in the stone cavern, the women went to care for Jesus. They would properly anoint him for burial, caring for the dead with reverence and respect. They went at first light. Were they afraid? Did they despair and weep? Or talk about the implications of what had happened? Did they wonder what would happen next? Did they know that everything was about to change for them and for the whole world?

We still find ourselves in a place of wondering about the future. How will we emerge from this era of global pandemic? We know about death. We've seen it and read about it. We have grieved the deaths of loved ones from the virus and grieved for

innocent bystanders in a grocery store, in an office, and at the Capitol building. We see addiction and homelessness, ongoing racial prejudice, a mental health crisis, and struggles of education in our own community. There will be droughts and floods and fires. Wars still rage, economic disaster and inequality are not foreign concepts. Promises of good overcoming evil can seem like idles tales to us.

We try to remember the resurrection. Can there be life after this?

There at the tomb, the women were perplexed. They expected to find a body, and were surprised to find the stone rolled away. The tomb was empty. The clothes were folded. And they were terrified to see two men there - dazzling in white - like angels? Like Moses and Elijah on the mountaintop? (They were terrified like Mary was terrified to meet an angel who told her she was to give birth to the Savior.) And the question from two men:

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

Well they *thought* they were looking for the dead - their teacher, their friend, their brother Jesus - he was dead - so that's where they'd expected to find Him. "He is not here, but has risen."

They were no doubt shocked. What was this all about? They couldn't be sure. But they remembered his words. In the painful reality of the moment, the judgement, the cross, his last breath, they had forgotten what he told them, but now, they remembered. This was what He told them would happen. They couldn't have pictured it at the time. but now, they remembered. And they went to tell the others.

It is true that without the proclamation of these women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James and the other women too - we would have no

knowledge of the resurrection. They are known in tradition as “the apostles to the apostles.” Believe the women. They proclaimed it first. He is risen from the dead! It seemed unbelievable then. According to new Pew Research surveys by more and more Americans find is just as far fetched. The whole story sounds like a legend, if not the fantasy of a Saturday morning cartoon. So *of course* the apostles could not believe the report that Jesus was gone. But Peter ran to see.

Why didn't they all run with him? The women were not believed. Perhaps they thought the body was stolen. In their grief the apostles were separated, torn apart. Something amazing had happened and they could not celebrate it, because they were in despair. They were terrified, and could not come together to find comfort or to rejoice. Where is the victory in this news of a missing Jesus? If we stop here the story is a mystery - or at best a prophecy fulfilled. Where is the feast and celebration? (Don't worry, it's coming.) But in this moment, it's just an empty tomb.

Jesus was dead. Now He is risen. But what can this mean?

All of humanity lives with fear and grief. The pain of our past experiences persists, and that trauma lives in us. Left unhealed, we pass *all of that mess* on to future generations. As we grow up, we learn that just like in our Saturday morning cartoons, the world can be a scary place, and often our expectations of finding a hero are not met. We fail and others fail us, and we struggle to see how new life can come from our large and small disasters. We still have fear, and we act like death is the end.

Christians - what do you believe?

In new life? In hope? In the power of Jesus? In Love? Mercy? Grace?

This year, and every year as we hear the story of Jesus, we put the pieces together again. We *re-member* his birth, his life, and ministry, his presence among the sick and dying, foreign women, sex workers, tax collectors, children and unnamed strangers along the way, his faithful friendships, his betrayal, his death, and his burial. We walk through the story, the exciting parts and the confusing bits, the miracles and the mundane, and long to get the full picture, to hear the good news.

He was crucified. But he is risen!

And we are risen with him. This is the victory! Yes in our baptism, we die a death of our own, so that we can be raised up with him, to be reunited with Him, and with all the saints, at the source with our Creator. Put back together. Like Voltron: Defender of the Universe. We are made one and made new and brought back into relationship, back together like in the beginning - like in the garden. We are made holy and made whole with all the people of God, and we are one in Christ Jesus.

By His resurrection, Jesus re-members us.

All God's people, all over the world, are reunited, redeemed, and re-membered into His body, His family, His promises and purposes. He brings us back together into one body of Christ in the world - from the empty tomb to gatherings in homes and houses of worship to remember the story, to hear the promise of how we are loved, accepted, forgiven and fed by this risen savior. The world is still terrifying and broken and yet is already redeemed and renewed in Jesus Christ. The Kingdom is here, and each one of us belongs and becomes vital to serving and sustaining our neighbors. Even when we forget, when we get pulled away, or walk away, or run - we are re-membered, brought back into the body in Christ Jesus.

This is the victory - this is the Good News of Easter:

This Lion of Judah, this mighty defender, our savior, this Jesus is not dead. He is alive and he lives, and we believe. And He sends us in His name to tell the story of His love, and His suffering and His peace that passes all understanding. To celebrate together the victory over death and the grave, and the glory of God in our world, as messed up as it is sometimes. We have a powerful story to tell - that might seem like an idle tale to some - but is truly the hope of the world.

Jesus is risen to bring forgiveness for sin, healing for the pain in our hearts and minds, justice for ones oppressed by systems and the wickedness and cruelty of the world, and new life to those who were once dead. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World, and He is with us even in midst of grief and despair, confusion, sickness and pain. In the grace of God, He re-members us, brings us back together, and makes us His own.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Alleluia. Amen.