

In a Winnie the Pooh story, Pooh and Piglet take an evening walk. For a long time they walk in silence. Silence like only best friends can share. Finally Piglet breaks the silence and asks, “When you wake up in the morning, Pooh, what’s the first thing you say to yourself?”

“What’s for breakfast?” answers Pooh. Then, Pooh asks, “And what do you say, Piglet?” Piglet replies, “I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today?”It’s Easter morning. What exciting thing is going to happen today?

The three women coming to the tomb had witnessed Jesus’ death. They had heard the promise of Jesus that on the third day, the Son of Man would be raised from the dead by the Power of God. They had heard his promise to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” They had heard Jesus teach, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me will never die.”

Nevertheless, on this morning when they come to the tomb, they are not wondering what exciting thing is going to happen -- **They come expecting death.** In spite of Jesus’ promises -- **they come expecting death.**

You and I have heard the promises of God, and yet, we come, like these three women, **expecting death.**

But the News of the Day is so opposite death!

So Incredible! So Unimaginable!

Can we believe such a story? We must remember that the story was no more believable in the first century than in our own day. Ridiculous, they must have said. Just a bunch of Tall Tales – pedaled as News of the Day. If they had headlines back in the first century they might have read like a Supermarket Tabloid – **Jesus’ Fakes Own Death!**

Dead Body Walks Away from Sealed Tomb!

The images are so powerful for me -- **Empty Tomb – Silent Witnesses.** Yet, truth **is** stranger than fiction! One can’t make this story up – this empty tomb story – no one would have believed it, especially coming from three women when women in the first century were not considered credible witnesses.

What do we do with the emptiness, if anything? Fill it up; fill in that mysterious empty tomb. In our day, our lives are filled with news, and more news and more news. We have Tall Tales, Headline News and Breaking News. We have thousands of media outlets that tell us what’s happening around the world. How much is truth? The news never fills us; never fills our souls; never fills our hearts.

Ultimately, this story is God’s story! It is about how God acts in the lives of his people. **God is not silent**, because if God had remained silent then the story would not have continued these past two thousand years.

God says no to the crucifixion and yes to the resurrection.

God says no to suffering and yes to new life.

Through the resurrection, God **fills** the empty places in our lives. He does it for the first followers of Jesus, for the Christians in Corinth, Athens, and Rome and here in southern Arizona for us.

God **fills** those empty places in us with an incomprehensible love; a love whose depth and understanding we try to figure out throughout our lives; a love so astonishing, miraculous, incomparable and unsurpassed. **Yes, the tomb was empty** -- but God's love, God's immeasurable love fills the emptiness deep within us.

What if we said to ourselves, like Piglet, "I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today?" I believe that we can expect love every day; a love that is transformational, a love that is all encompassing, that takes every bit of the sacred and the not so sacred in you and in me, and holds us up to God as one of his children. A love that sustains us through difficult times; and a love that opens our heart to others and allows us to be grateful and gracious, even to our enemies.

Today, Easter morning, but really every day we take a breath we can believe in the Savior's love, who rose for us, because God's love was and is so great.

Today and every day we are loved. We are loved by a God of surprises, loved by a God who gave us his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. It is a love that is inexhaustible; never wearying, never wavering. God's love is tireless, pursuing us throughout our lives; especially when

we feel as empty as his tomb. The Lord of love is here for us to grab on to, to hold like a treasure in our heart.

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. Arlington cemetery in Washington, D.C., is revered for it is the honored resting place of Americans who sacrificed their lives for our freedoms.

The tomb of Jesus is exceptional because... IT IS EMPTY!

Can you imagine how these three women felt? To have already experienced the crucifixion and the grief associated with that, now they come upon an empty space, a cold tomb. They're terrified. They need time to process the event. We do too. The women didn't understand then that you have to go through empty tombs on the way to resurrection life. But we know what empty tombs feel like: a huge void in our life, an empty place deep in the pit of our stomach.

But who do you tell and how? What headlines are you going to say to someone who wasn't there? Will it be a tall tale or the truth of what really happened that first Easter morning? Something exciting happened Easter day!

The resurrection has to do with life and with love. God said to Jesus. "I love you." God was saying "You will not die." The cross was a slap in God's face by

humanity. It was the utter rejection of Christ, the son of God, by those who thought they knew more than God.

But the resurrection was God turning the other cheek. It was his way of saying, “I don’t care what you do to me, I will love you absolutely.” Love will not tolerate the limits of a cold, dark tomb. God loves us all, in spite of our pasts.

Those who love can understand the resurrection. Those who love put their faith in a God who loves. The tomb is empty, but it is pointing forward to a living Savior, one who stands close by and whispers, “No matter what, I love you.”

About 350 years ago, Blaise Pascal, mathematician, philosopher and physicist, observed that the human heart is like an “infinite abyss.” He discovered that we human beings try in vain to fill our hearts with everything around us – education, jobs, homes, money, things, friends, and family. But none of these earthly things help, “since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.” In spite of his brilliance and his contributions to mathematics, **Pascal realized that life apart from God is empty;** He found refuge in Jesus Christ alone. He found love in Christ to fill that infinite abyss. We can too, and that’s an exciting thing to do each and every day.

As we fill our lives with God’s love, emptiness retreats. But the women “fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said

nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” Emptiness in our souls can bring about dread and fear and silence on our parts.

Mark’s abrupt ending is the place where you and I join in the Gospel story. It is here where we are called to bear witness to God’s resurrected Son, to the love of Jesus that knows no bounds. Here the Easter story is laid in our laps for us to take out into the world. Love inspires love. God’s love inspires us to love others.

The joy of Easter is lifting our eyes **up** from the emptiness – **up** from our problems -- to our possibilities – to God’s inexhaustible love. Easter is God’s promise to us, that neither life nor death can conquer us. Easter is hope. And Easter is the confirmation of Jesus Christ’s presence in our lives today. The Lord of love is alive and ready to lead us to the gracious and almighty Father. **Hallelujah, He is Risen! Amen.**