



“It Seems Like Nonsense”

Pastor Andy CastroLang

April 21, 2019

Scripture (a translation by David Bentley Hart):

Luke 24:1-12

24 But on the first day of the week, while it was still very early, they (the women) came to the tomb, having with them the spices they had prepared.

² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ and entering, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴ While they were in confusion about this, look: two men in clothing shining like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ And when the women became terrified and turned their faces down to the ground, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? [*He is not here, but has been raised.*] ⁶ Remember how he spoke to you, while he was still in Galilee, saying “It is necessary for the Son of Man to be delivered into the hands of sinful men and to be crucified and on the third day to rise again.”

⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they related all these things to the eleven and to all the others.

¹⁰ Now it was the Magdalene woman, Mary and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹ And in their eyes these reports seemed like nonsense, and they did not believe them.

Sermon:

Well, that's a relief, right? If you dressed up, and gaily told people around you, or the checker at the store before you came here, "Happy Easter" they probably responded kindly, but might have thought privately to themselves: "what nonsense".

Or

"Christians are so weird and so gullible".

Maybe you have someone you fight with over your faith...my favorite cousin, closest to my age, used to argue the foolishness of my faith with me.

We would both get hot and bothered. I'm pretty sure he scorned me with thoughts of "that's just nonsense."

So isn't it just so great to realize that you are in the good company of the heroic women who were the very first witnesses of the resurrection...and who were utterly disbelieved. By their closest friends and family!

Foolish women.

Ignorant women.

Women who can't be trusted.

The *very first*, the *privileged ones*, who meet the messengers in lightning-bright garments, and are reminded of Jesus' teachings, and who are sent out with the Easter testimony.

The very first messengers of the great good news of Easter...and they get such a demoralizing message from the menfolk.

"What nonsense."

I love Luke for being so honest and clear about the status of women who followed Jesus, the roles of women, the stories of women in his gospel.

Telling us about the women around Jesus. Over and over.

Telling us how significant the work was that they did; what it meant to be one of the women around Jesus, supporting him financially, feeding him and his hungry band. Telling us about their love, their joy, their devotion. Telling us that the women stood there, at the cross, and

watched their dear friend die an agonizing death. Telling us that they went to provide their last sign of love and heartbreak by anointing his dead body.

Luke's telling us how they become the very first disciples of the resurrected Christ... Christ who is now transfigured and beyond death, Christ who is vanquishing death, destroying the life crushing tragedy of death.

And going out to tell the world...and being told it is nonsense!

Two thousand years later, the world, whether it is the checker at the grocery store, or family and friends...folks still look at you and me and quietly, or not so quietly, say "what nonsense is this?"

It is what countless souls over thousands of years have come to trust, and share with the world:

God is not done with us, or with God's good creation. And death, which seems to put an end to every story, every effort, every joy...death will not get in the way of God's ongoing story.

Death is not the last word.

In the risen Christ, we see that the world is changed forever by the emphatic statement of God through Christ: Love Conquers.

God's love is life, and God's love is greater than death. This is not nonsense!

In our call to worship this morning, we heard the words of Paul in his first letter to the church at Corinth, as he struggles to find a way to share the meaning of Easter...

He says it is a "mystery" and that we will be changed.

We don't know how, but perhaps "in the twinkling of an eye", we will be moved; from deathly to imperishable.

Listen, I am a pastor and I have spoken words of hope and promise a thousand times about this life beyond death...

I do not share this hope out of fear or dread of death, rather, it is because of the joy of love, love that will not let us go, even at death.

Love that will have the last word, and the word is life, life in its fullness.

Life beyond our weak imaginings.

So filled with joy!

LIFE: So complete in harmony, communion, peace and love that you feel as if one walked in cities whose walls are precious stones and whose streets are gold; where there is no war, dirt, disease, darkness, disorder, despair. (Images from the book of Revelation, and the prophet Isaiah)

LIFE: So beautiful and delicious that you imagine a banquet, and feasting every day. (Another image from the book of Revelation)

LIFE: So deeply contented that one might imagine the peace we feel as a child snuggled at the breast of their mother, but in this new reality, snuggled at the breast of Mother God. (Image from the psalms)

This is what the women reported to the men, and with time, they came around.

This is our report to the world!

This is the work of Easter: to be bearers of the good news, to bring the transformative message of the risen Christ to the world, because God is not done with us yet, and the world is changed forever, by Easter morning and the witness of the women who would not be silenced.