

*Resurrection Happens*  
**Luke 24:1-12**  
**Preached by Dr. Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
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Imagine this, it's 12 o'clock on election night. You're waiting for the results, praying your presidential candidate will win but it's too close to call. The electoral count is almost even but neither candidate has yet received the required 270 electoral votes. There's only one state left untallied until one network anchor calls the state for the other candidate.

You're devastated. But wait, maybe the other networks called it differently. You grab the remote and nervously start channel surfing but the news is the same. All the networks are reporting the other candidate will be the next President of the United States. Your candidate is defeated.

You turn off the TV and crawl into bed. You remember telling your friends, "If so and so wins, I'm moving to Canada." After tossing and turning, you drift off to a restless sleep. You wake up several hours later and feel even worse. You don't want to turn on the radio or get the morning paper because you don't want the bad news in your face.

Finally, your curiosity takes over. You cautiously reach for the remote. You see your candidate on the screen, not given a concession speech but claiming victory! The pundits got it all wrong. Victory is snatched from the jaws of defeat!

Maybe you've had similar experiences. At first the news is bad but later, to your surprise and relief you find it was a mistake. The bad news became good news!

That's what happened two thousand years ago on that first Easter morning and the Good News we celebrate today, "Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed!" remains the corner stone of our Christian faith.

On Good Friday both Jesus' adversaries and supporters alike believed he was defeated. The religious leaders who plotted against Jesus went to their homes and families to celebrate the Passover, confident that was the end of him. On the other hand, Jesus' disciples went into hiding, fearing their heads would be next on the chopping block. All they could do was wait for things to settle down before sneaking back to Galilee and try to put everything back together again.

But on the third day everything changed! The women who went to anoint Jesus' body were confused when they saw the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. They were afraid when a mysterious stranger told them Jesus wasn't there, he was raised from the dead. After collecting themselves, they went to the Upper Room to tell the twelve disciples the wonderful news but

they didn't believe it. Then Peter, followed by John, ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Just as they were told, the tomb was empty and Jesus' shroud was neatly folded on the slab.

On Palm Sunday we started preparing ourselves for Good Friday. Palm Sunday is like a false spring, when a few nice days of warm weather towards the end of winter suddenly end with a snowfall. Likewise the premature celebration of Jesus' triumphant procession into Jerusalem ended with Jesus being nailed to the cross.

Good Friday was a terrible day bringing out the worst in everybody. The priests and Pharisees joined together to destroy Jesus. Not content to condemn him to death for blasphemy, they turned on him like thugs and started slapping and spitting on his face.

Jesus' disciples fared no better. Despite their multiple professions of love and loyalty, when the chips were down they proved to be foul weather friends by deserting, betraying and denying Jesus when he needed them by his side.

Why do we dig all this ugly stuff up every year? Because Good Friday is a mirror we can see ourselves in when we watch the priests and Pharisees, Pilate, Peter, Judas and the all other players in the story. Usually we don't like seeing what we see but it's necessary. That's why we can't skip over Good Friday and glide into Easter. For our own sakes we must acknowledge that even though we weren't there when they crucified our Lord, we're just as capable of behaving as badly as those who were there.

That's why we should acknowledge the crucifixion on Easter morning as long as it's not the end of the story. On the third day Jesus was raised from the dead. If he wasn't, we'd still be stuck in Good Friday.

Thank God for the resurrection! When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life," he was pointing to his resurrection as the way out, our way of escape from the messes we find ourselves in. That's what Easter morning is about, Christ winning the ultimate victory over sin and death, not for himself but for all humanity.

Yes, we still have to endure times of crucifixion, the pain and suffering that comes from sinful attitudes that bring about bad behaviors, but since our sins are crucified with Christ we're promised we will rise with Christ. In other words, we don't have to stay the way we are. God gives us a choice, to stay stuck in Good Friday forever or experience rebirth and new life through Christ.

Something else to think about: Easter doesn't necessarily happen according to the church calendar. Easter happens according to God's timing when you least expect it, at any given moment, if you let it. That last phrase, "if you let it" is essential. Here's where faith begins.

Being faithful is more than believing Jesus is the Christ. Real faith begins when you're ready to trust your life to him.

One hundred years ago there was a famous acrobat who entertained crowds by walking a tight rope over Niagara Falls. First, he'd walk across and back by himself. Then he'd walk across and back pushing a wheelbarrow filled with 200 pounds of bricks. Finally, he'd ask the crowd, "Do you believe I could make it across with one of you riding in my wheelbarrow?" They would always clap and shout "Yes!" The Acrobat would then single out the person in the crowd who clapped and shouted the loudest and say, "Wonderful, hop right in and let's go."

Faith isn't just something you think is true, faith is what you do about it.

Although I'd never want to exchange places with Peter and the others on Good Friday, I do envy them for being there on Easter morning. It must've been amazing, wonderful and liberating. Imagine, seeing Jesus alive again in all his glory. What they experienced went beyond joy.

Did you ever wonder why our Easter celebrations are flat in comparison? Is it because we've heard the story so often that we've become inoculated by it, even though our churches pull out all the stops with spring flowers and special music? Easter, like Christmas, can become just another family holiday with an egg hunt followed by church followed by Easter dinner.

So, how do we catch the joy of Easter since the proclamation, "He is risen!" doesn't come at our command? Is it because there's something wrong with us? Or is it because Easter happens when it needs to happen.

Especially after being beaten down and overwhelmed by the stresses and strains of life, that's when you want Jesus to raise you up and give you hope. But it doesn't always come over you in a sudden burst of enthusiasm and bliss. Many times resurrection happens when you sense that still small voice assuring you that despite everything, God is nearby to rule and guide you into the future.

Other times resurrection happens in a special event, like the birth of a child or a son or daughter's graduation. Sometimes it happens watching a magnificent sunset or when you're hiking through the woods. Resurrection happens when you're reading an inspiring passage or hearing a beautiful song.

Resurrection happens when you find yourself giving aid and comfort to someone who can never pay you back, when you mentor a so called difficult child or you feed a hungry family. Resurrection happens when you stand up for a good cause against all odds or you speak truth to power to correct an injustice. Even if you get crucified for fighting on the side of the angels, resurrection still happens. God creates in you a new heart and renews a right spirit within you. Resurrection Happens when you least expect it, rising up to bring new.

During the battle of Britian in the late summer of 1940, a church in London was preparing for the annual harvest celebration. Fruits and vegetables were placed on a table in front of the alter on Saturday afternoon. That night the church was bombed. It was later closed up and the congregation had to move to a new location until after the war.

In 1945 some of the members went back into their church to see what could be salvaged from the rubble for the reconstruction. To their amazement they found a small garden flourishing in what was once the chancel. In front of the garden was a plaque that was blown off the wall with a quote from John's Gospel. It read, "I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in me though you are dead, yet shall you live. If you believe in me, you will not perish but have eternal life. Do you believe this?"

Resurrection happens even in the face of death and destruction. He is risen, he is risen indeed! The battle is over, the victory is won through Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you believe this?