



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Pastor Neal Buckaloo
Sunday, April 24, 2011, Easter Sunday
What are you looking for this morning?

What are you looking for this morning? An Easter egg? A chocolate bunny? An invite to a brunch later in the morning? . . . Or are you looking for a word for Monday morning or a month of Mondays? Are you looking for a word that speaks to the heart of life itself? Are you looking for a word that resonates with the very foundations of life itself? . . . God has such a word.

You will not find it in the headlines of the newspaper, on the 6 o'clock news, or the latest message on your smartphone or Ipad. You will not find this word in the National Basketball Association playoffs or the National Hockey League championships. Nor is it in bank accounts or stories of lottery winners. You will not find it in the glib answers of talk radio hosts.

You will find this word from God hidden in the life, teachings and deeds of one who died as a common criminal. He, Jesus, was betrayed and abandoned by his closest disciples. Those who were threatened by him plotted to have him put to death. Pilate, the Roman ruler with power to grant life or death, acquiesced to the shouts of "death" from the crowd. And so Jesus was nailed to a cross on a hill outside of Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago.

All of this took place. Yet he was on this earth to bring that word of God for life and its restoration. This revitalization of life was to be a gift to you and me and to our neighbors – all around the world. Are you looking for such a word today? That word is found in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Anointed of God, he is the baby born in a manger we celebrate on Christmas Day. He is the one who teaches and heals in order to make clear that God, the Creator, is about doing something new; a reordering of relationships between the Creator and the human family. He, Jesus, is God's very own Son.

He is the one Mary Magdalene and the other Mary expected to prepare for burial that Easter morning that we heard about in the Gospel of Matthew this morning. These women were in for a startling surprise! The ground shook beneath their feet. An angel appeared and rolled back the grave stone from the tomb. . . There were others there, Matthew reports. Guards had been sent by the temple officials to stand guard so no one would steal Jesus' body. At the sight of the angel and the rumble of the earthquake, they were filled with fear and fainted away. But not so for the two Marys!

Straight away, the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised from the dead, as he said." A marvel, God's surprise! There is more to life and our lives than we can see. There is more to God's intention for life than we can see here on earth.

The angel's message was mind boggling – startling. But there is more! Suddenly the risen Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” The two Marys recognized him immediately as Matthew reports, came and knelt at his feet and worshipped him.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary shared this Good News with others – Jesus's disciples and other followers. It was joyful, startling, confounding but wonderful. Their teacher and mentor who embodied God's presence on earth was not captive to human death. Rather, he died and rose from the dead to lead us to God's heart. In Jesus, God's purpose extends beyond this life, to eternal life around the very throne of God. That was their story. So, what is your story?

Where can this Risen Christ lead you? . . . He can lead you to human wonderment at the Creator. God has made all things new in the life, death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He can lead you to find the power to forgive; to find the power to forgive yourself, to forgive others, because God has and is ready to forgive you in Jesus Christ. The Risen Christ can lead you to lean into the future with hope, because finally the future is God's, not ours. John's Gospel states it clearly and succinctly: ^{John 3:16-17} For God so love the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believe in him may not perish but may have eternal life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

God has addressed our world, especially in God's Son, Jesus the Christ. God dared to enter our human existence, experience human death, then rise from the dead to live and rule eternally. All of this because God is intent, passionate, about saving the world, your world, your life, claimed for God by Jesus Christ, who has risen from the dead. That is worth a strong “Alleluia and Amen!!”