

"Proclaiming the Ridiculous!" on Easter Sunday
Rev. Terrance Jacob on Matt. 28:1-10 at SALC 4/5/2026

Today we proclaim the ridiculous! We proclaim that the Jesus who was pronounced dead on Friday, is alive now on Sunday. We proclaim that after having been cruelly whipped and hanged on a cross, His body was placed in a secure tomb, guarded by armed guards, and on Sunday morning, He rose up leaving the tomb empty.

Everyone, even at that time, thought this would be ridiculous. That's why, even the disciples had forgotten that Jesus had told them that "he would be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again, and that they should wait for him in Galilee". They had to be reminded of this by the heavenly beings - angels - because they had dismissed Jesus's statement of death and resurrection as ridiculous in this world.

Before we get all high and mighty and get on the disciples' case for not believing, let's be honest, we too would have thought that to be ridiculous, right? In fact, many today, maybe even some here today are saying, "Of course it IS ridiculous".

Throughout history we encounter things that we thought were ridiculous. Like people flying - "ridiculous," people said. Then came the Wright Brothers. Now we can fly! But seriously, throughout history people have heard things that they thought ridiculous at the time. Even as late as the 60s, if Lutherans in America said that women could be pastors, most in the church would have said, "Don't be ridiculous!" Then in 1970 the first American woman, Elizabeth Alvina Platz was ordained to be a Lutheran pastor. In 2013, the ELCA elected the first woman as Presiding Bishop. Not ridiculous any more, right.

Talking about women, let's go back to the narrative. It was the women, Mary and other women who were close to Jesus, who had gone to the tomb that morning. It was the women who found the tomb open - the heavy stone had been rolled away. The women saw the angel and heard the angel proclaim the resurrection. Then the women were the first disciples to see, touch and hear the risen Christ, then rushed up to the Apostles to proclaim to them, "He is Risen!" This elite group of 12 - now 11 after one betrayed Jesus - did not believe them. "Oh it's just a bunch of cackling women with their typical idle talk. They are speculating, emotional and sentimental - as most patriarchal societies would say. *We'll leave that topic for another sermon.*

My point is that at times, even the best message sounds ridiculous to us, depending who the messenger is. It was true then and it is true now. Perhaps not so much about women - although we're not done yet as a society with gender justice and equality. But for most, the identity of the messenger has an influence. But really, it is our stereotypes or our expectations of the identity of the messenger that determines the authenticity of the message for us. Jesus himself had his teachings discredited. He was stereotyped as nobody from small town Nazareth. Then even with all he did and taught, he was called a charlatan, because he "ate with sinners" - drank and partied with "questionable people" - the tax-collectors and loose women and men. Jesus did not fit the mold, the identity, the credentials of the messiah.

One of the other things that determine if a message is ridiculous is: "Who is the message being proclaimed to?" The Hearers.

In the gospel today, the women were the Messengers, with the Message, "Jesus Christ has Risen!" and the hearers are the Apostles. Even if one appeals to the authentication of the message coming from the angels and recent history. Even if one appeals to the fact that the messengers had been close to Jesus and had seen with their own eyes, and are people of good "standing", this proclamation may be declared ridiculous, when one considers the identity of the hearers.

Thank God though, that by the Holy Spirit, the "leaders" eyes were opened and they eventually believed. Some took a longer time being convinced - but by God's grace they believed and then proclaimed it themselves. If they didn't we would not be here today. We would not be enjoying Easter meals or Easter eggs – that would be sad! No, but seriously, we would not believe, but for the Grace of God! We would not believe in the resurrection and the Second Coming. We would not even believe in the first coming of the messiah on what we call Christmas.

If God by Grace through the Holy Spirit did not act to apply the message of Christ to us, the whole death and resurrection story would just be a story. A myth of the crazy religious people who have a religious need to believe in something other than themselves. It would be a ridiculous message that is created by the religious establishment to give false hope. But when the message is unwavering - "He is Risen, take it or leave it!", when the messenger is unwavering, convinced beyond doubt. When the messenger will not rest in proclaiming "Christ is Risen", "The Messiah is alive!" When the messenger is on fire proclaiming, "God's not dead, He is alive!" When the messenger proclaims the ridiculous saying like Paul, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." Then maybe the doubting hearers will believe the ridiculous too. Let us not stop proclaiming, "Christ is Risen!" *He is risen indeed!*