

The Resurrection of Our Lord (C)
April 4, 2010
Text: Luke 24:1-12

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Growing up on the West Coast, one of my favorite things in the world was going to the beach. I loved the clean, sharp, salty smell of the ocean, and the warm, soft feel of the sand between my toes, the warm glow of the sun and the cool breeze blowing up off the water. Most of all, I loved body surfing—wading out into the water, bobbing up and down in the surf as the waves rolled in, waiting for that one big wave that could carry me all the way in. Or maybe it would throw me head over heels and take me under until I could struggle to the surface, gasping for breath. I loved feeling the power of a really big wave, picking me up and carrying me with it. It was exciting and fun, and just a little bit dangerous, so that I hardly noticed the temperature of the water, until I got out, shivering and teeth chattering, to lay on my towel on the warm sand, in the warm sunshine, listening to the sound of the waves breaking on the beach.

Those waves rolling in from the ocean, even the really big ones that I could ride all the way to the shore, they're nothing at all compared to the wave that has been rippling around the world ever since that Easter morning when Jesus' followers found his tomb empty. We are here today because we have been caught up and carried along by the biggest wave in all of human history, the wave of new life given by God when God raised Christ from the dead. Easter is about much more than what happened to Jesus after he died on the cross and his body was laid in the tomb. Easter is about what God is continuing to do to renew and heal this whole creation, and with a power stronger than death carry the whole human family home to our true life with God.

That powerful wave was building force all through Jesus' work. He fed the hungry. He healed the sick. He invited people to experience God's compassion, and announced God's love and acceptance and forgiveness for all people. He taught that God really wasn't so interested in having people obey religious rules. Instead, through Jesus God was changing the shape of the human family, overcoming divisions and bringing all people together with forgiveness and sharing. That was why the authorities opposed him, why they condemned him and put him to death—because they couldn't believe in a God who wasn't all about rules, that God wasn't against other people because he was on their side. When they put Jesus to death on the cross, they thought they had put an end to Jesus and his dangerous, subversive teachings.

But that wave of God's love was bigger and stronger than the rulers knew. It was stronger than the cross, stronger than cruelty and death, stronger than

the tomb with the rock rolled to seal the entrance, to seal the body of Jesus inside. On Easter morning the power of God's love rolled that stone away and raised Jesus to new life. And it didn't just return Jesus to the life he lived before. It carried him on into a whole new life, so that he could continue his work of making the powerful love of God truly present to people around the world, in every generation, no matter who you are or where you come from, no matter where you've been. Jesus is risen from the dead to touch your life, my life, every life, with God's gifts of forgiveness and hope and renewal, to catch you up in this wave of new life and carry you to your true home—into life with God that begins now and continues forever.

It was Easter morning when that powerful wave broke out into the open, and it has been carrying God's people along with it ever since. In fact, some of us were caught up by this wave right here, at the baptismal font in this church—baptized in the name of Jesus and made part of God's world-wide family. Some of us were baptized somewhere else, in another church; and maybe some of us are thinking about baptism, wondering whether we should take the plunge. But don't be fooled by the small amount of water in the font, because it can be dangerous. It is God's intention, through this water, to drown everything in us that is self-centered and selfish, full of ourselves and focused only on what we want. God desires to bring an end that sort of life, to put it to death, so that God can begin something new in us, so that God can raise us up to a new life with Christ, and carry us on to the future only God can see.

You are part of that future. When you leave this place of worship, you will be carried by that wave out into the rest of life, where you are called to be God's person in the world, to be part of Jesus' ongoing work of love to bring wholeness and healing to your small corner of this amazing and beautiful creation. Before you go, you are invited to share in the meal at Christ's table, to be strengthened for everything ahead of you. In this simple meal of bread and wine that we share each week, the risen Christ is present to feed us with his love, to fill our lives with his risen life, to touch us with the healing power of his forgiveness, so that we can be his people, so we can do his work, so that the wave of his love can reach into the lives of the people we know—our friends and family, our neighbors and coworkers.

People of God, you have been made part of the one thing that matters—the powerful love of God that is making all things new. You have been caught up in the wave of Christ's unending life. I pray it will carry you all the way into God's embrace of love, into the triumph of God, when finally death itself is made to be nothing, and God's love is everything. Thanks be to God. Amen