

Alleluia. Christ is risen. That is what I said to you last Easter, the one before that, and the one before that. It is what I have said to you for the last fourteen Easters. Every year it is the same. It never changes. And I have nothing new to say to you today.

Every year we come to Easter and tell the same old story. We have been repeating ourselves for two thousand years. We know how the story ends as soon as it begins. And that just may be best thing I can say to you today. It means that you can count on the Easter story. It is trustworthy and here to stay. Regardless of who you are, what has and has not happened in your life, what you have done and left undone, or what you do and do not believe, the story is true for you today.

I used to come to Easter wanting to say something profound, novel, and earthshaking. Sometimes my ego gets the better of me and I still want to do that, but the longer I live the more I just want to say and hear the same old thing: “He is not here, for he has been raised.”

I want to be reminded that Easter is still true and still happening. I want to hear the same story not because I think the story has changed since last year. It is because my world has changed over the past year. It is because I have changed, and some years are harder than others. You know that too. So, with every intention of repeating myself let me tell you the Easter story.

It happened “as the first day of the week was dawning.” Light was pushing back the darkness. A new day was beginning. If you have ever needed light and warmth to return to your life, if you have ever needed a second chance and the possibilities a new day offers, this story is for you. Alleluia. Christ is risen.

“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.” They were there when Jesus died and was laid in the tomb. If you have ever had your heart broken by loss and laid someone you loved in the tomb, this story is for you. Alleluia. Christ is risen.

“Suddenly there was a great earthquake” and “an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone” from the tomb and said, Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised.” If you have ever needed some earthshaking good news, if you

have ever needed hope, if you have ever lived as if death had the final word, this story is for you. Alleluia. Christ is risen.

“He has been raised from the dead, and indeed is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him,” is the angel’s message for the women. Galilee is where Jesus and the disciples are from. It is their home. If you have ever struggled to find Jesus, if you have wondered where he is, if you ever thought that Easter has nothing to do with your ordinary everyday life, this story is for you. Alleluia. Christ is risen.

So let me ask you question. Why did the angel roll back the stone from the tomb? I know that sort of sounds like a “Why did the chicken cross the road?” kind of question. So let me give you a hint. It was not so that Jesus could get out. The reason the angel rolled back the stone was so the women could see in, so they could see he had been raised and is not there. And that means resurrection was already happening behind the “great stone” of their life. It means new life is always and already taking place even when we do not see it, don’t expect it, or don’t think it can. Alleluia. Christ is risen.

And that is why today we fill the church with alleluias, lilies, hymns, candles, white vestments, and unreserved beauty. They do not set this place and day apart from all other places and days, instead, they point to and reveal that resurrection is always and already happening in all other places and days. This is not the day of resurrection. It is another day of resurrection. Alleluia. Christ is risen. That is our story. And it is worth repeating. So let me tell it to you one or a few more times again. Alleluia. Christ is risen. Alleluia. You and I are risen. Alleluia. We are risen.