

**Easter 2012**  
**John 20:1-18**  
*Hope Rising*  
**The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller**

A man who lived in Chicago flew down to Florida for vacation. His wife was on a business trip and was planning to meet him in Florida the next day. When he reached his hotel he decided to send his wife an e-mail. Unfortunately, he miss typed her email address and sent it instead to an elderly woman, whose husband had died the day before. When the grieving widow checked her e-mail, she looked at the computer, let out a piercing scream, and fell to the floor dead. Her family rushed into the room and saw this email message on the screen:

*Dearest Wife,*

*I just got checked in. Everything is ready for your arrival tomorrow.*

*Your Loving Husband.*

*P.S. Sure is hot down here.*

Imagine getting a message like that. Any kind of news from the other side of death is a real life changer. Easter is that for us and more.

- Not an email message, but a living message.
- Not from a human, but from God.
- Not from hell, but from heaven.

Today we celebrate Easter and the empty tomb. It's the best news ever. It means that death is not the end. It means that now we can see the world, and life, and people, and ourselves, and our problems in a whole new way. Easter changes everything.

A teacher asked her third grade class what they wanted to become when they grew up, "President," "fireman," "police officer," "teacher." They each answered. Then it was Billy's turn. The teacher asked, "Billy, what do you want to be when you grow up?" "Possible," Billy responded. "Possible?" asked the teacher. "Yes," Billy said, "My mom is always telling me I'm impossible. So when I grow up I want to become POSSIBLE."

Easter means anything and everything is possible. You and I are possible because the tomb is empty. Life - in this world and the next - is possible because the tomb is empty.

In Spain there is a monument commemorating Christopher Columbus who died in 1506. At the base of that monument is a lion destroying one of the Latin words that had been part of Spain's motto for centuries. Before Columbus, the Spaniards thought they had reached the outer limits of earth. Their motto was "No More Beyond." The word being torn away by the lion's paw is the word "no," making it read - "more beyond." Columbus has proven that there is "more beyond" and the world has been forever changed.

In Jesus' day death was believed to be the end – no more beyond. But as we heard in our gospel reading this morning with Jesus there is always more beyond. He walked out of the tomb and that has forever changed life in this world and the next – for Mary, for the disciples, for you, for me, for everyone.

A woman was told by her doctor that she had three months to live. Her doctor encouraged her to start making her final preparations. She invited the pastor over to her house to discuss her final wishes. She told him which songs to be sung, what Bible passages to be read, what she wanted to be wearing, to have her favorite Bible buried with her. Everything was in order.

As the pastor got up to leave the woman suddenly remembered something. "There's one more thing," she said excitedly.

"What's that?" the pastor's reply.

"This is very important."

"Okay," said the pastor.

The woman said, "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand." The pastor didn't know what to say.

"Surprised?" the woman asked.

"Well, yes!" answered the pastor.

The woman continued. "In all my years of attending church I always enjoyed the meals we shared together – spiritual or otherwise. My favorite part was when the dishes of the main course would be cleared away and someone would lean over and say, 'you can keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew something better was coming. When they told me to keep my fork, I knew it wasn't Jell-O or pudding. It was cake or pie - something really good. So I want people to see me in that casket with a fork in my hand and wonder, 'What's with the fork?' You can tell them, 'Something better is coming, so keep your fork.'

That's our hope here today on Easter no matter what our situation. With Jesus there is always something better coming. He is our living message from the other side of death. He makes the impossible possible. Jesus has proven there is more beyond so keep your fork. The life we share in this world is but a foretaste of the feast that is yet to come. Amen.