

EASTER 2010**Luke 24:1-12****The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller*****The Stone is Rolled Away***

Today is Easter! The celebration of the empty tomb, but what does that mean? I often wonder what it meant for those first disciples. I wonder how they felt that first Easter morning... I want to show you what they might have felt. Wait here! I'll be right back!

(ride in on the unicycle from the back of the worship space)

What were you feeling when I came riding in on the unicycle? Shocked. Surprised. Perplexed. Troubled. Doubtful. Amazed. Take a moment right now and get in tune with your feelings.

(put unicycle on the stand)

Luke tells us that those were same reactions of the people who discovered the empty tomb or heard the news. For them, the meaning of the empty tomb brought all kinds of emotions. They didn't know what it meant at first. That is so true for so many of us today.

The empty tomb means many things, most of all it means God has a plan for you and me and for all of humanity. It means, we no longer live under God's judgment. It means, we live by forgiveness and the light of God's grace.

Now, there is nothing that can separate us from God's love. Nothing, not even death itself. That's why we sing, Alleluia! *(sing Alleluia from Handel's Messiah)*

We sing Alleluia because death is not the final chapter in our lives. We have the promise of abundant and eternal life with Jesus starting right now because he is the death conqueror. Can I have a "Thank you, Jesus!"?

That means – like riding a unicycle – we live in the balance of life facing our fears and guilt of the past and with hope and promise of the future. We live in the balance of what was and what is to come.

God has rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb to let the disciples in and to let Jesus out. God has set Jesus loose in the world, and loose in our lives, which is exactly where he longs to be.

Some people believe their lives are so messy, they've blown it so badly, that Jesus couldn't possibly want to be a part of their lives. Maybe you feel that way here today.

The truth is, Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead, and walked out of the tomb because our lives are so messy. He knows we're messy. We are messer-upers, some of us just hide it better than others. Jesus doesn't want to be in our lives because we're good, he wants to be in our lives because we aren't good. That's why we need him loose in our lives.

Question:

What part of your life do you need Jesus to help you clean up?

What guilt or fears does he need to remove from your conscience?

What's broken in your life that you need Jesus to heal?

God rolled away the stone so that Jesus might enter into those dark places of our lives. Sometimes when Jesus comes into our lives it's big, and things change fast. More often than not, Jesus comes in ways that are more subtle and quiet.

That happened to me this past week. We've had on our prayer list a non-church member for the past three weeks or so. Let's call him the father-of-the-bride. I did a wedding for a young couple who are not members and the father of the bride has had some health problems lately so he's been in my thoughts and prayers. The Spirit nudged me to go see him. So I did. I stopped by at his work place and told him that I had him in my thoughts and prayers, that our congregation has been praying for him, and that the Spirit nudged me to stop by and see him. A glow came over him as we greeted one another. He said his health is improving and that his life is getting better every day. We visited for only a few minutes. I thanked him and started to leave. This is where Jesus entered in. The father of the bride said to me, "You made my day." He had made my day by saying that I had made his day.

Jesus not only makes our day, he makes our lives. He makes every day special. That's why we celebrate Easter. That's why we celebrate the empty tomb. Jesus is not dead. He is very much alive. He is loose in this messy world, invading our very messy lives. He makes our day so that we can make other people's day special.

As you leave this morning, you'll be tempted to tell people that the pastor came rolling into church this morning on a unicycle. By all means tell people that story but then tell them that I did that to point out how the disciples might have been feeling that first Easter morning when God rolled away the stone and set Jesus loose in the world to ride into our lives making every day special.

As you leave worship this morning the Greeters will give you a stone. Carry that stone with you, or put it some place where you'll see it regularly. Each time you see it, may it remind you that God has rolled the stone away that Jesus is no longer in the tomb. He is loose in your world bringing hope and healing. Not because we've got it all together, but because he loves you and me and all peoples.

Jesus is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.