Stunning Good News

Isaiah 25: 6-9

Mark 16: 1-8

Friday I had a confusing episode. It wasn’t biblical – but somewhat disorienting. Someone or something took one of my email addresses and created a phishing scam. You may have gotten an email from me asking you to contact me. If you replied to the email, you got a second email with some story about me needing help and asked you to take iTunes cards and send the payment information to a 3rd email.

This episode has rattled me. How could someone do this? As it turns out, there are all sorts of ways this could happen. No doubt it happens every day. Maybe you too have had your email taken – or maybe some other part of your identity.

This is not good news in any sense of the word. It was a reminder of the world we live in where mean things happen. They have all sorts of degrees. At its best this is an inconvenience. Yet it is also something more. I found it confusing and disorienting. I wanted to flee from the circumstances – but where can you go in our electronically connected world.

All of this happened within the midst of Holy Week – it is a confusing and disorienting time too for Christians. We celebrate Palm Sunday with a great festival of procession into church. Children led us with palms and we said Hosannas! But the events of this week are deep and quick. There is a betrayal during a religious celebration – and we remembered that on Thursday night. But we heard there that Jesus shared a new commandment – love one another. Love one another Jesus said even as he was handed over to the authorities. Those same crowds that called out Hosanna last Sunday on Friday we calling out Crucify Him! And if we had been there then, more than likely we would have been in both crowds.

Then Jesus died. The one who his followers thought would be a great leader and remove the yoke of the Roman oppression became a victim of the religious and political establishment. Jesus died and was buried in a tomb. Without ceremony. He was put there.

So that Easter morning the women – Mary, another Mary and Salome – came to the tomb. But they found the tomb was opened and that the body of Jesus was not there. They did find a young man dressed in white and he said to them – This Jesus you have followed is not here. He is Risen! You can look around if you want but he is going ahead of you to Galilee. Go and tell the others.

This was mind bending for these folks! What they thought they had understood about life and purpose is set on its head. Yes, they knew about the debate on life after death. The Pharisees and Sadducees of the Jewish religious leadership debated that stuff. But this was different. This was in front of them. And they could not figure it out.

They fled from the scene and didn’t tell anyone – then at least. Each one of the Gospels tells the resurrection story in a different way – they all share the news that Christ is Risen. But the interactions are somewhat different. They all have women coming to the tomb at first. No men come with them. They all share a reaction of amazement and wonder. They are all stunned.

And all these years later we need to have our frames rattled a bit.

A phrase used a lot around PHPC is this is a place to connect faith to everyday life. This Easter story is the place that all starts. This account is our account and we see everyday life through the lenses of the resurrection faith. SO how do we connect faith with everyday life?

Friday even before I figured out that something was wrong with my email, church members and staff reached out to me. The folks who manage our electronic resources and tell the staff what we need to know have surrounded me and provided me with the information needed. Staff and church members have reached out and offered counsel and hope.

I have been directed and nurtured by all of these folks. Nobody said they were praying about it, but I have a sense that is just what happened.

Today for this Easter we come to share the Good News that Christ is Risen! We sing songs of praise and hope. And today we also share communion. Often during Holy Week communion is presented as “the Last Supper” remembered on Thursday evening. We did do that this week. But we also know that communion is a celebration that the Risen Lord shared. According to Luke’s Gospel the Risen Lord broke bread with 2 folks that first Easter. They had not recognized him until they shared the bread together. Likewise, today we break bread and share the cup. As we do we proclaim a power of new life and hope and grace and love.

For each of us today our circumstances are different. Each of us react to these circumstances with different emotions and thoughts. Many of these give us pause, maybe even stop us in our tracks. But God’s good news is quite stunning. Sometimes it overwhelms us into silence. Yet it also calls us to responds.

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

This is stunning good news!

Thanks be to God!