

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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We hear Matthew's version of the resurrection this morning, and Matthew tells it a little differently. Do you recall why the women went to the tomb? In Luke and Mark, they brought spices to care for Jesus' dead body. But, Matthew simply says: they went to see the tomb. That's it. Not to fix anything and not to finish the burial. They weren't expecting a resurrection. And then—an earthquake. The ground shook and the gravestone rolled away. An angel, that is a messenger, sat atop the stone. And, the guards who were there to make sure no one could steal the body, well they, turn into fainting goats. And then, Christ was no longer there. But here's the thing: the earthquake didn't resurrect Christ. It revealed what God had already done— what death could not stop.

And that experience is familiar, because we live in a world that feels like it's constantly shaking. Military conflicts and wars that seem to multiply – from Ukraine to Gaza to Venezuela to Iran – each one ripples into our daily lives. Or, the literal storms and fires and floods that reshape the land, and our insurance premiums, reminding us that climate change is real. Or, the seismic shifts in Artificial Intelligence moving so quickly that we're still trying to understand what it means to be human. And closer to home—the ground shifts with new diagnoses, the ebbs and flows of grief, changing relationships, and uncertainty about what comes next. And when things feel unstable, we don't easily see life, we assume there isn't any to be found. And

when we decide something is dead, we stop tending it. We stop investing in it. We stop believing anything new could come from it.

I had a moment like that last year. My partner, Alex, decided to plant some seeds in a raised bed. And by “plant,” I mean he dumped enough seed for a 100-square-foot flower bed into 9 square feet. I was convinced that it was overcrowded and nothing would grow. And I remember looking at that small patch week after week—nothing. No sprouts. No growth. Just dirt. And I had decided that it didn’t work, and it wasn’t worth my time. But then, late in the summer—suddenly—sprouts. Everywhere. Growth spilling over itself. And it didn’t stop. It kept growing into the fall, even into early winter. At that point, it was abundantly excessive. And I remember standing there thinking two things: first, I need to supervise Alex next year, and second, I was wrong. And not just wrong about the plants, but wrong about what was possible. And because I thought nothing was happening, I stopped paying attention. I moved on. But, it wasn’t that nothing was happening; I just couldn’t see it yet.

And that was the story at the tomb. Jesus had already been raised. The earthquake didn’t cause resurrection; it revealed it. And that’s often how we experience God. For God is bringing about new life around us and in us and through us before we even see it. Before we believe it. Before we understand it. And God has a long history of showing up and liberating God’s people – . What I know to be true is that God will keep acting, even if it takes us time to notice it. After all, that first Easter morning was not the moment God started doing something new; rather, it is a moment where we begin to see what God is already doing.

And, in Matthew, this seeing never stays private. The women at the tomb saw, and then they went. They became the first messengers to point out the ways that Christ is living and moving among each of us. They went to share the good news that nothing can stop our God. That death cannot remove God's love. That although you can kill a person, you can't stop Christ from living on.

And we catch glimpses of that even now—we see it in the ways we're opening our space so more people can enter and belong as we become ADA accessible. We see it in the relationships growing across faith communities as we engage with the church of San Timoteo to support and to be ready for whatever uncertainty our neighbors might face this spring. We see it as we launch confirmation classes for the first time in over a decade. You see, resurrection is not always dramatic, not always obvious, but it's real and it's already happening. Quiet signs of life that could be missed if we're not looking, if we rush past, or if we've already decided nothing is there.

And sometimes, the signs of that life are right in front of us. During our construction, I've been noticing things in this building in new ways. And one thing that caught me the last few weeks were our original wood railings. You see, on your way into church today, you passed them coming in the front doors, or to the balcony or the lower level. And at the ends of those railings are carved acorns. How many people saw them? Some did, but most of us didn't. They've been there the whole time and we didn't notice. I can't help but be reminded that that acorn is a seed—just like the ones Alex planted in the soil. Small. Easy to overlook. Easy to pass by without a second thought. And yet, inside that small seed is an entire, strong oak tree. New life that is hidden in plain sight. You see, sometimes what looks like nothing is full of

life. The tomb looked empty. The garden bed's soil looked barren. Even the railing looked ordinary. But in all of them, life was there.

So today, as you leave, take a moment. Slow down. Look at those railings. Find one of those acorns. Notice it. And remember: it's not always that nothing is happening; it's that we don't always see it yet. For God is at work, even where it looks like nothing is happening. Christ is living among us – bringing love and justice and peace. After all, Easter teaches us that Christ is risen—not because we finally noticed, but because God has already done it. And now, we are learning to see God's new life among us. Alleluia. Amen.