



It was my first Easter doing this whole pastor thing. And I suppose I wanted to make a good first impression, since wisdom tells us those tend to happen only once. And it's possible I had a bit of an ego then as some hot shot straight out of seminary, as if I was under the impression that the fate of the empty tomb rested on the shoulders of worship leaders everywhere two thousand years later. Nevertheless, it, at least, appeared that it was going well that morning. There was a rousing "Christ is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!" from the assembly. There were trumpets blasting throughout the sanctuary, spilling over into the parking lot and beyond, as we sang the traditional "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today." And then came the sermon.

I'm sure I wasn't saying anything overly inspirational.

After all, the most memorable part of that Gospel

proclamation did not come from the pulpit at all. Instead, out of the corner of my eye, this young boy was sprinting down the center aisle. It was a setup much like this, oddly enough. He rushed past the baptismal font, up a few steps, and plopped himself down right in front of the altar, turning around and facing all the onlookers with the biggest smile on his face, as if he just pulled off a miracle to rival that of the Resurrection itself. And he sat there for what seemed like three whole days, again, rivaling that of the Resurrection itself.

It left just enough time to see the looks on all the faces filling the pews that Easter morning with many dressed in more than their Sunday best, and perhaps just as many attempting to be on more than their Sunday best behavior. Come to think of it, there are not too many instances that we can experience the unique combination as described in the Gospel of Mark that we heard just now: the most unique combination of terror and amazement. Safe to say there are no however many years of seminary training to pull off what that young boy managed to do in the spur of an Easter moment: to make a bunch of Lutherans who thoroughly marvel at children being in their sanctuary space, but still cling to the good 'ole days of sitting perfectly still and silent by their parents and grandparents in the same exact pew for decades. The looks on their faces said it all: terror and amazement.

Of course, two of those faces were the parents, who were trying so desperately hard to just mouth the plea for their child in the center spotlight to scurry back to his seat. And yet, he needed to stay there for the rest of us. He needed to stay there for the rest of us to have the whole Resurrection miracle further settle into the depths of our soul, to allow the holy combination to seize us to our core: from terror to amazement.

Yes, that precious child of God, un-settled us just a bit in our desires to have everything go just right in Easter Sunday worships and every other instance in our life, for that matter. But all of that was no where near what Jesus was trying to do in un-settling the world. Because this was not just about a more direct pipeline from the earth to the heavenly realm for us church-goers. This was about Resurrecting an entire world by overflowing it with love and compassion and grace and mercy and hope, all of that most holy combination of God rushing all over humanity, no matter how well we do our Sunday best-ness or on any other day. This was about Resurrecting the idea that this God was truly the one caring for an entire world, including for those who may un-settle us, all made possible by the one who un-settled guilt and shame and fear and sin and death. And none of it was done according to our human plan, to our standard operating procedure. It's just as if he rushed down the center aisle of how we think this world should function, and plopped himself down in our hearts with the biggest smile on his face; as if he just pulled off a miracle that would frighten us a bit, but also give us the joy that only the youngest children of God can reveal to the rest of us.

Yes, perhaps a bit of terror upsetting what we thought was normal: that God would be perfectly fine keeping things to our comfortable status quo of not having to love all our neighbors, for starters. But there was certainly relentless amazement, too, and not just over death being soundly defeated that one time in a tomb, but sheer amazement over a Gospel that insists that absolutely nothing can happen in this life to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. That, evidently, it is not on the shoulders of worship leaders, or parents trying to raise children to perfection, or children of God of all ages trying to pull off their Sunday best for every day of their life. Evidently, it's done. It's taken care of for all eternity. And yet, it isn't quite done, either. The Resurrection continues on, as our Lord fervently rushes throughout this world that God still adores to overflow it with love and compassion and grace and mercy and hope, including for those who aren't so sure they deserve it. Rest assured, Christ has run down the center aisle of your life, no matter what baggage of the past is in the way, and plopped himself down in the depths of your heart, with the biggest smile on his face to bless you with the most amazing reassurance: nothing will ever happen to make him move from that just-as-holy of a spot within you. And for that Greatest News of all, that Christ is Risen for the whole world to enjoy, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!