

April 17, 2022, Easter Sunday
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Decorah, IA
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson
[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Remember, We Are Re-membered

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of the risen Christ.

Remember, the angels tell the women at the tomb, remember what he told you. Remember he said he would die and rise again. Remember.

At first, the women can't remember.
So much has happened. They've experienced such trauma.

Memory is such a strange thing.
What do we remember and why?

This week I've been trying to remember all that's happened in the *years* since this congregation last celebrated Easter Sunday in the sanctuary. It was three years ago, Easter 2019.

What do you remember from the past three years?
Who do you remember who's not in the sanctuary today?
Who are you grieving this Easter?

That first Easter, the women go to a place for memories, to the tomb. They go to remember Jesus and grieve him.

But when angels show up and ask if they *remember what Jesus told them*, I can just imagine their response.

Remember what he *told* us?
We've just been through hell.
We watched as our teacher was tortured and killed.
All our hopes for him, crushed.
We remember a lot, but *his teachings*, not so much.
Our minds keep reliving the horrible things that have happened and that's about all we can handle right now.

The women can't remember the promise.
Any hopeful talk seems to them an idle tale, as it does for the apostles later.

That's how it is with us humans.

Our brains are wired to pay attention to painful, fearful, negative experiences.

Those are stored in our brain much more easily than positive ones.

Apparently, our brains evolved this way to protect us.

It was crucial for our early ancestors to remember the sound of a prowling tiger, less important to savor the bird song returning each spring.

I reflected upon this three years ago on Easter but this year, after two years of a pandemic, it seems even more important to name.

That feature of our brain, meant to protect us from tigers, also keeps us stuck in stress cycles:

unable to let down, unable to breathe freely, unable to hear the birds.

So no, of course,

the women don't remember what Jesus said and did and all that he taught them.

All they can remember is the hard stuff.

They are buried in their own tombs of grief, fear, anxiety.

But then, something changes for them.

As they stand there in the light of a new day, in that open, empty tomb, near the stone that has been rolled away,

as they hear astonishing good news from the angels - he is risen - things start to shake loose for them.

They lift up their heads to look around, they begin to breathe a little more easily. Something greater than trauma gets inserted into their mental loop and they DO start to remember more about Jesus.

You know, he did talk about dying and rising again.

And, he said what is impossible for mortals is possible for God."

"Remember how he healed and forgave people, how he showed such compassion and welcome?

It was like he brought life with him wherever he went."

"He crossed boundaries, too: eating with sinners and tax collectors, inviting us women into his ministry.

All the normal barriers didn't seem to stop him.

Maybe he really did rise from the dead."

The women start to remember more about Jesus.

As they do, they realize they know something deeper and stronger than the trauma they've experienced.

They've known such love and hope and life in Jesus' presence.

Slowly they begin to imagine other possibilities.

Perhaps *that* love cannot be stopped, maybe *that* life is stronger than death, and hope will arise again.

Light seeps into their closed hearts and minds.

The stones of fear and anxiety start to roll away.

Pain and fear lose their grip.

They run from the tomb to share the news that Jesus is risen.

They experience resurrection, as do the apostles eventually.

This is what the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection does for us, for our brains and our bodies. It changes things.

It breaks through all that entombs us in fear and despair.

It interrupts our hardwired anxious, negative thinking

to remind us of what is deeper and truer - God's love is stronger than death.

Life and hope cannot, will not be stopped.

Slowly the stones are rolled away, the light seeps in, new possibilities emerge, hope arises.

We can hear bird song again.

We can hear the strains of Alleluia played by the band, sung by children.

We can join the song.

We can remember God's faithfulness through these three years revealed in so many ways:

Outdoor worship, online worship, Epic Easter Vigil bonfires,

shepherds caring for flocks of members, three ordinations, a building renovation,

grieving families surrounded with love, cards sent, prayers offered,

new members welcomed, prayer shawls, healing from accidents,

parking lot communion services, Lutheran World Relief kits,

an Zoom Christmas program, Immigration clinics,

thousands of dollars raised by the youth for Afghan guests and the Ukraine crisis.

Life that cannot be stopped.

Remember. Remember. Remember.

And when you can't remember, know that God remembers you.

God remembers us. God is faithful and holds us always.

God also re-memembers us- puts us back together again-

in new and life-giving ways as people, as a congregation.

We still bear wounds, as the risen Christ did,

but we too are re-remembered, made new, again and again.

This is what the good news of Jesus does, it changes us.

We are opened to new life.

We are remembered.

Those angels stand in an empty tomb, and they tell us to remember - he is risen.
He is risen and we will arise.
Lift up your heads, sing out with joy.
Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Thanks be to God.