

“Alleluia! and Amen.”
Rev. Lindsay L. Fulmer

Daybreak. The faintest light brightens the horizon. Land, sea and sky, all shades of grey, begin to blush. Imperceptibly the earth turns. First a halo, then a shimmering crescent, a brilliant pure gleam of light as a slight edge of sun appears. Silently, slowly, what was a single hued line swells into a full symphony of color: the sky now pink, now gold, now azure blue, blue as a dream, blue as a robin's egg, a clear and shimmering pool, a calm wide sea of blue. In that moment all that lies beneath the sky emerges, born again as the shadowed veil of darkness lifts into welcoming day.

Daybreak. Every time it happens, rain or shine, the birds know it's something worth singing about. Every sunrise arrives accompanied by a chorus – a call and response of birdsong, a chattering sweet chirping choir. Slumber ends, and it's “rise and shine, and give God your glory, glory” every creature, every living thing.

Daybreak. More than an event predicted by an almanac. Daybreak can signify a deeper meaning. The Easter story we heard today begins “at the break of day” which to Luke's audience would have meant something more. It would have suggested a divine victory was about to be revealed. When the waters parted and allowed the Israelites safe passage across the sea floor, it happened “on the first morning watch.” The psalmist sings praises, celebrating God's victory over the chaotic waters that threatened Jerusalem “at the break of day.” A biblical story that begins “at the break of day” offers to the listener hope for something more than sunshine.

On the first day of the week, at the break of day, the women came to the tomb, expecting to honor the dead. In the pale morning light, they entered the tomb. What happened next? Day breaking in their soul. Bright as lightning, two men stood next to them. Why do you look for the living among the dead? they asked the startled women. He is not here, he is risen. Remember what he told you? Then they remembered. Daybreak – a breakthrough, like rays of light through a cloud, that would change their life, their world, the future, beginning that early morning and every day after. Even as the gentle light of dawn signals an earth-turning event, so did the empty tomb herald a tremendous revolution, a revolution that shifted the course of history; their history, our history, human history.

In a short story called “The Other Side of the Hedge”, E.M. Forster tells about a young man who ran down the same road nearly every day for twenty five years. The road was narrow, hot and dusty. It was tightly bordered on both sides by a dense brown hedge that prevented him from hearing or seeing anything on the other side. One day, exhausted from the heat and the monotony of the road, he sat down to catch his breath. A cool breeze of fresh air blows across his face. It seemed to come from the hedge. With some difficulty, he pushes past the branches and thorns, and suddenly finds himself in a whole new landscape, a place of exquisite beauty, tree-lined meadows decorated with bright wildflowers and their sweet scent. Streams of clear running water sparkle in the sunlight, and as if for the first time, he realizes

the air is filled with cheerful sound of birdsong and crickets. Climbing a hill, he turns to catch a glimpse of the hedge and the monotonous road he has left. The daylight begins to fade, and there, in the twilight, on that thin border between heaven and earth, he senses for the first time what eternal life must be like.

Daybreak. The dawn of a new day, the transforming power of a new understanding, we can sleep through right it. Get up run right past it following the same old dry and dusty path – miss it altogether. Jesus kept pointing to a hidden, but blossoming truth – the realm of God is not far away, but as close to us as a breath, a freshening breeze. By his life, death and resurrection Jesus has reached his own arms through the thicket of thorns to show us what our days are made for. Not an endless run along a narrow and tedious road, but life made new, brimming with hope, and beauty, and power.

Daybreaks. The gospel, as Karl Barth said, is not a natural therefore, but a miraculous nevertheless. Beyond the saturation of springtime and sunshine metaphor, the tomb stands empty. On this all the gospel storytellers agree. That's the revelation, the revolution of resurrection, that unsealed, open space. Peter ran down the cemetery road to see for himself, stooped down, and peered into the darkness. And what he saw amazed and changed him.

The good news? Even a space meant to contain death, God can, and will, and does fill with grace. Remember that, when the news is far from good, when the road ahead looks long and weary, hedged in on either side. Remember what Jesus said, and even more, what he did. He broke through the narrow constructs of a domination system dependent on death-dealing power, subverted it by peaceful means. He walked around with daybreak in his eyes, a clear vision of the dawning of a new world. If only we would awaken to it. Stand still long enough to realize the world ever turns toward the light, and love has the power to prevail, even over death. Be willing to look into the emptiness, even the emptiness of grief and loss, and see space that God can, and will fill with unexpected light.

So may we awaken to the beauty of this day, and may God's redeeming grace shine daybreak into the very depth of our souls. Christ the Lord is risen, and we along with him. May we, with all creation, sing Alleluia! Amen. May it be so.