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St. John's Episcopal Church, Mount Pleasant
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The Feast of the Resurrection: Easter Vigil

Lions, and tigers, and bears, O my!
Lions, and tigers, and bears, O my!
Rabbits and foxes and people, O my!

What in the world is this church coming to?!?

Well, if you think these marvelous critters are fantastic, listen to this:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ any less astonishing - or any more astonishing - than these marvelous animals? I don't think so.

Because if you look on the face of it, dead people don't usually just vanish into thin air! Well, maybe in movies, but in real life? Naaaaw...

So what in heaven's name happened that morning outside Jerusalem?

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb... The disciple whom Jesus loved bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there... Then Simon Peter came and went into the tomb... Then the other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white... Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus... and he said to her, "Mary!" (*Gospel of Matthew, para.*)

Truth can be stranger than fact.

For I do believe it is a *truth* that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended to his Father. Your Father. Our Father, who art in heaven. I don't let the facts get in the way - I don't worry about the fact that people don't just get up out of their graves to enter some divine mystery. No, the *truth* that I believe is more important to me than the facts I know.

Why?

Because I believe that the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the truth of

love. I believe that in spite of the fact that we are a broken mess of a people, God's love is boundless - and it is God's love that drew his Son - and draw us - into the Kingdom of God.

Jesus had a short ministry - only about three years. Yet in that time he healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he touched the untouchable, and he did it all out of love. That would be love for you and for me and for all humankind. If only we would listen.

If only we could just set aside the facts for a moment and *listen* to what he said: Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the hungry. Blessed are the meek.

If only we could just set aside the facts for a moment and absorb into our hearts the *truth* of Jesus Christ in the triune God. The *truth* that his mission on earth was finished. The *truth* that he lives still in the mystery of the Holy Spirit. And the *truth* that he is present in the holy bread and wine of our Eucharist.

And the *truth* that we are to do as he said.

We are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our minds and with all our strength.

We are to love one another.

It all comes down to that.

But it's not easy - he didn't say it would be. In fact, Jesus warned us that we'd be persecuted, that we would be like sheep among wolves. Our mission is to put aside our worry and to carry on. Our mission is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, free the prisoner, and heal the sick.

And we do that when we love one another. When we love the stranger. When we see Christ in our midst. When we reach our hand out to the one on the margin of the page and bring them into the story.

For it is a magical story, a mystical story, a story of truth and a story of love. The Bible is one long love story between God and humankind - and tonight - this morning - we celebrate the fulfillment of that love in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now we have our work before us.

Inspired by this love story, we must roll up our sleeves, get our hands a bit dirty, and carry on with the work God has given us to do.

We must be the hands of Christ in the world.

And I have no doubt we can be those hands.

Let us celebrate and be glad - for

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!