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

 Today is Easter Sunday, the day Jesus was resurrected. American people embrace Easter as a day to have fun and spend time with family, that is, before the pandemic stopped us from meeting together. In spite of the pandemic, though, Easter eggs are still colored and scattered in yards for children to hunt, Easter candy floods our grocery stores, hams are trimmed and garnered with spices for a Sunday dinner, and this Christian holiday is celebrated throughout the world.

 Yet, the day Jesus was raised from the dead, no one was really celebrating. You see, the followers of Jesus were still traumatized by his death, so the words we read this morning from the Gospel of Mark were not bubbling from their lips, at least not immediately. And this is good information to remember as we revisit our Scripture text this morning. It was not until three women visited the tomb of Jesus that life changed for the women and their friends.

 The graveyard scene looks something like this: three women show up at the tomb wondering how they are going to roll the stone away to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. As they walk into the tomb they are greeted by a young man dressed in white, and they immediately become alarmed. The young man tells the three women they have nothing to fear, yet, when they see that the body of Jesus is also not present, they freak out. Of course, the young man tells the women not to be alarmed, but nothing is reasonable about his statement. When they are told to go and tell Peter and the disciples that the body of Jesus is no longer in the tomb, and they leave quickly. Their reactions are predictable given the circumstances. How would these three women convey what they just encountered at the tomb? How would we share this story if we had been those three women?

 This last question, how to share the story of resurrection, is one that continues to haunt the Christian church. How does anyone share a story of a person dying, being placed in a first century coffin of sorts, and then try to explain to their friends how the dead person is gone. It’s a ‘dicey’ story to share, sort of like sharing with a friend you just saw a flying saucer, and they look at you like you’re a little nutty. Yet, this story of Jesus being brought back to life was so real and authentic that a small group of Jesus followers started what we call Christianity. Not only did they start a new religion, but they continued to write about the resurrection…that’s why we have other gospels in the bible that give more detail on how Jesus died, came to life, and then returned to his father in heaven.

 I do wonder how we would have reacted to the news upon hearing that the body of Jesus had disappeared. It’s doubtful I would have believed the story about Jesus initially. Only after the story had been shared many more times would other people believe that Jesus was dead and then came to life. That’s how the story of Jesus got shared, person by person, and that’s what keeps the Jesus story alive today.

 But did I mention that we are enlightened and more educated than the first Christians were? People today want proof when they hear of a person dying and coming back to life. Just look at the many books written about people being resuscitated, and saying they saw a great light. The great light can’t be proved, but the people who experienced this light first hand cannot be talked out of their experience, and neither could those first followers of Jesus.

 Resurrection became the focus of the first Christians belief about God, and they couldn’t be talked out of it. For me, the word resurrection is profound, like, how do I explain resurrection. Last year I watched an OPB series called “Resurrection Plants.” The video shared how plants who live in extreme drought conditions can look completely dead, but with one drop of water they spring back to life. They shared that there are thousands of drought resistance plants that carry a genetic gene to resurrect themselves from literal death. These plants are created to be reborn. As water becomes less prevalent in different parts of the world, scientists are studying the chemistry, and the genetic make-up on how these resurrection plants transform themselves from death to life.

 As I sat in my chair listening about resurrection plants, my mind began to slowly grasp this practical application to bringing life to a dead plant. I thought of the three women from our story in Mark who were trying to problem solve how to roll the stone away from the tomb. They never dreamed they were about to witness a profound miracle. And the truth is, even when the anxiety-filled women return to tell the disciples what they just saw or didn’t see, they feel overwhelmed by the whole experience. I mean, think about it, they saw Jesus die on the cross, and now his body is gone. They are emotionally shaken by the experience. Jesus was dead, and now they are told he lives.

 Just as resurrection plants appear totally dead, and actually are dead, the act of resurrection does not take place in the disciples until a few days later, when they share a meal with Jesus. You see, a simple drop of water; a simple sharing of a meal between Jesus and the disciples, and resurrection becomes real! A story of rebirth is shared. The story of resurrection continues.

 To think that a video has captured the action of resurrection in a dead plant is amazing, yet, behind this glorious transformation of dead plants coming to life, a bigger truth about the process becomes apparent … resurrection is real, but hidden in mystery. Scientists have yet to explain why certain genes bring dead plants back to life, but they have seen for themselves how a single drop of water has brought forth life from death. That’s why certain plants who carry this gene are called resurrection plants.

 I would imagine three women couldn’t explain the ‘how’ behind the resurrection of Jesus to the other disciples either. All they could do is share how they felt, and tell the disciples what they saw. Whether the disciples believed them, depended on large part what they themselves found when they saw the empty tomb. Consequently, we, too, must struggle with the concept of resurrection. Theologians make strong statements in support or non-support of the resurrection of Jesus, but they do this because they have a need to prove it did take place, and that is not where resurrection can be explained.

 Resurrection can only be found through personal experience; a drop of water causing a dead plant to become a vibrant green, or a slice of bread giving the eyes of the disciples the ability to see the body of Jesus sitting alongside them. It is then that the disciples could say, “*Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight*?” Trusting in the impossible helped three women and the disciples to see. First they saw nothing, then they were given sight.

 You and I must come to our own conclusions about the resurrection of Jesus. I am not hear to convince you that Jesus lives, even though, we say these words throughout the Easter Season, “Alleluia. Christ is risen! And we respond by saying, “The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!”

 What I will say, is this. Can we become a bit like Paul, the Jewish man who could not believe in the resurrection of Jesus initially, but later wrote these words, “*the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as Scripture says, that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, … and finally,’ Paul says, ‘he presented himself to me*.’” The explosive power of resurrection comes in the rebirthing process, one drop of water at a time. One word of claiming Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our ability to believe in a risen Christ is an ongoing journey for us to experience the rest of our lives. Jesus says, “Seek and you shall find.” Alleluia! Christ is Risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!