

Sermon Acts 10:34:43 Luke 24:1-12 Easter April 8, 2007

## Amazing Grace: It's Only Just Begun

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound... It is a great hymn. And - it's a great truth. God's grace. God's creating, loving, life giving, suffering and ever forgiving, life saving and new life giving power.

And 2000 years after the first Easter, when the Amazing power and the amazing grace of God was seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we've only just begun to understand the mystery and wonder of it all.

Luke's words marked a beginning of our understanding.... They did not find the body. They did not find the body. Not the three women who went to the tomb to perform the tasks of burial - Not Peter who ran to see for himself, Not the Roman authorities or the Jewish leaders who had most to gain And - truth be told - not the current sensationalist - but publicity savvy film makers - with their incredibly scientifically shaky Tomb of Jesus hoax...

They did not find the body. But the amazing thing about Easter, the Amazing Grace of it, is that the body, maybe the most famous body in the history of the world, the body of the crucified and Risen Christ, found them. And that's the truth of Easter. In Jesus, through Jesus, by Jesus - God finds us.

The truth and wonder of Easter is not that no one did, and no one has found the body of Jesus - the wonder is, the Amazing Grace of God is, that the body - Jesus Christ - found them, then, and - keeps on finding people now, finding a way into the minds and hearts - into the lives of we poor ornery people.

That's the wonder of Easter - people, lost in the overwhelming mystery of life and death, are found, touched, and changed by the story and the spirit of Jesus Christ And isn't that true for you? Aren't you here because Jesus Christ, dead on a cross, buried in a tomb, somehow has found you. Jesus - has ...

Found you, hurting at losses in your life, maybe just hoping that his message is true Found you, tired of the battle of good with evil, in you and around you, where good seems not to win enough. Hasn't Jesus Found you with good words that help guide you through the terrible tempting messages of our media...

They did not find the body, they found something more - The Amazing Grace of God's amazing love in Christ, finding them. I pray in some new way this day God's grace will find you, find a way into your and mind and heart and soul. Please pray with me...

O Lord of life in all its meaning beyond our knowing, may the words of my mouth and the words these your faithful and loving people hear, be good news for all to cheer, this day anew - in Christ.

Peter ran to the tomb, and he did not see the body. Then he went home amazed at what had happened. And aren't you, shouldn't you and I be - Amazed, maybe more amazed than we are, not only at what happened that first Easter, but even more at what has happened since that first Easter morning? This morning more than a third of the world's people will celebrate Easter, the great good news of Gods' giving, suffering, forgiving, life giving love.

Some will sing the words of this hymn - The strife is ore, the battle done, the victory of life is won - In the bulletin we shared these lines Now I give you certain news, to spread by land and sea, or these days - by Email - You may nail him to the tree, roll the stone above and seal it - But against the morn, unmaimed, new born, the living truth shall rise.

Songs and Poetry and this Easter celebration - all this all began when three women did not find the body, and the disciples thought they were crazy, and Peter... Peter was amazed.

From that beginning what an amazing thing has happened. A world has been changed. Is all the news good? Of course not. Because we are not all good. And the great hymn sings it true - Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

There was, there still is, there will still be - wretchedness in this world. Blindness to goodness and truth, to kindness and love, to peace and justice. And Death's dark shadow. And so The cross is still the central symbol of our faith.

But the wonder is, the Amazing Grace is, that even though the struggle - sometimes the terrible struggle between evil and good, death and life goes on, in crime and poverty, war and disease and disaster ... We know that the battle has been won... darkness and death have been Defeated. And if we let ourselves - we can see, if we look, we can see Which way the world is moving... that this world, warming or not, wars not withstanding, the world is moving toward the light.

Dafur and its terror and terrible cruelty is not new - the attempted annihilation of the Armenians nearly 100 years ago may have been worse... and history has its long list of such horrors... The civil war in Rawanda was terrible, so was our civil war, the sheites and shunnies battle even as Protestants and Catholics did before.. How we love to make war.

The Aids crisis is a terrible thing .... So was the Black Plague centuries ago... But what is different, isn't it amazingly different, is that now, now we see the darkness and more and more we seek to bring light to bear...

Yes - Dafur - but also ... yes - 10,000 raised for aid to Dafur... from a local High School. And Aids - yes - and Bill Gates from Microsoft, and Rick Warren of Purpose Driven fame and fortune, and people around the world, pouring resources into the Aids battle Compassion on a scale never seen before...

Compassion - that was at the heart of Christ's life and ministry and teaching – And when we Care for the least and the last and the lost in life, and we truly show our care for him. The touch of Christ has been felt in our world - you've felt it, and the working of his spirit can be seen - You've seen it - in our world. And isn't it amazing - what has happened since that first Easter morning.

Not just that no one found the body - there was no body to be found - But that such a small and shocked and saddened and suspicious handful of Disciples were found by God - and graced by God with the faith and courage to tell the story of God's love - that changed lives - and changes lives still.

On a personal level - one person at a time - we will celebrate the wonder of God's Amazing Grace on Tues. when we celebrate the resurrection hope for Fred Fuller. His life is in many ways a living testimony to God's Amazing Grace at work in our world - and his life was a witness to the power of Easter.

He cared for his wife for many years after her stroke - and singing all the while - with deep conviction, the wonders of our faith conveyed in the hymns and anthems of this Church. Then Fred suffered a stroke himself and lost the power to sing that had been so much a part of his life and his witness of faith.

And yet - and yet - he sang his faith in other silent ways for years - the light of Christ's promise shining through in the spirit with which he lived. Amazing Grace - can be at work in us. We can shine light – we can share love.

And it began - it began - with Peter's amazement at the tomb on Easter..... And then the wonder of the power of the living God found Peter - And later - Peter spoke words that may still be a vital key to our hopes for the future

Peter was blind to the far reaching purposes of Jesus Christ - until his eyes were opened and he saw the truth - The truth that the good news of God's love made known in Christ was meant for the whole world - to know and to believe.

And - In a world still too much divided by religious battles - Peter spoke to a vision that should guide us still. Peter said - I truly understand that God shows no partiality - but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. God's grace at work in Peter's life opened the world to the disciples, and God's grace can guide us still... to see - not a world divided by our different faiths, but a world able to be united by faith in God.

Georgia Harkness puts all this Easter hope in these few words... I do believe the world is swinging toward the light.. Amid the dark, such faith pierced through the night - was blind but now I see - to give of self, and not to count the cost, to learn, to teach, to labor and to pray, to serve like Christ, the least, the lost, the Last,

These were, these are, the beacon fires that can light the way... Our light grows dim, the air is thick with doom, and everywhere men's souls are crushed with fear - But - grace our fears relieved

The call resounds across the teeming years, lift high Christ's cross, Serve God and trust his word, I do believe the world is swinging toward the light.

Amazing Grace - how sweet the sound - It's Easter.... And the wonder of Easter is that people, lost in the overwhelming mystery of life and death, are found, touched and changed by the story and living spirit of Jesus Christ

What about you, this Easter 2007? Aren't you here because Jesus Christ - dead on a cross, buried in a tomb, somehow has found you? Found you - hurting at losses in your life - maybe just hoping that its all true - the victory is won Found you - tired of the battle of good and evil where good seems not to win enough. Found you - found us - with good words - love one another even as I have love you, good words, godly words, that can help guide us through the terrible tempting messages of our media

The wonder of Easter isn't so much that They did not find the body - As it is that they found something more... Haven't we all? The Amazing Grace of God's amazing love in Christ, finding us. I pray in some new way this day, God's Grace will find you anew, find a way into your heart and mind and soul. That you will be led to see the light of God's amazing grace and love, at work in your life, and through you, that that love might shine more brightly in our world.

The Lord has promised good to us, his word our hope secures, He will our shield and portion be as long as life endures .. And... life for us has only just begun... Amazing Grace - we are God's forever children..... Because he lives, the Risen Christ, we too shall live.... Amen.

David W. Robertson, Pastor