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But what if he hadn't. What if he had stayed in that tomb and not risen from the dead? Not only would there be no Trinity Church, and I would have no job, but there would be no Easter resurrection Celebration.

What if evil and cruelty, and jealousy and wickedness had the last word? What if our story ended with the crucifixion? You know, life is difficult and then you die.

Last night at the Easter vigil we heard our story, which is God's story, told in scripture and in the ancient symbols of the new fire, the Exsultet, the lighting of the paschal candle and the ringing of bells. God's story is an old story of both victory and tragedy, tragedy that is transcended by God doing a new thing with us, through us and sometimes in spite of us.

In God's story evil never has the last Word. And it didn't with Jesus either. God came in Jesus to teach us love and to show us love and to be love. The forces of evil, let's face it – we – did all we could to shut him up, to kill him, silence him and to lock him in the tomb.

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead”, Paul reminds us.

And there’s not a damn thing we can do about it. We still try to lock Jesus back up in that tomb in ways large and small; In our petty and not so petty cruelties, in the way we judge others, and judge ourselves, and in our indifference. We try to lock him away, but we fail.

As we sang in our psalm this morning:

“The right hand of the LORD has triumphed! *
the right hand of the LORD is exalted!
the right hand of the LORD has triumphed!”

Our Gospel reading starts with a little spark of hope. The glow of dawn is breaking into the night sky. The women discover the empty tomb and run back to tell the others in great fear and great joy. Jesus himself meets them on their way. New life is begun. The women, full of new energy, tell the other disciples that Christ is alive.

But that is not the most important thing about Easter. God has a bigger goal for us than to just remember the resurrection of Christ Jesus. It is amazing that Jesus was raised from the dead, but if that’s as far as we get, “Wow, wasn’t Jesus great.” Then we haven’t gotten the message of God’s story that has taken 1000s of years to tell.

The most important thing about the resurrection is that we can rise from the dead, and I don't mean just when we physically die, at the end of our days. Jesus rose so that we can rise from the dead now, and live. He rose so that we could stop looking for the living among the dead. So that we can put aside all that holds us back and grab hold of life.

I'm going to tell you a secret – it's the secret of how to do this. Shhh! It's a secret, so be sure you don't tell anyone! Here's the key. Jesus did not raise himself from the grave, but God raised him. What did Jesus do in order to be risen from death? Absolutely nothing. Nada. All Jesus did to rise to new life was die. That's it. He died. That's the secret. That's what we must do to live too. We have to die to all the stuff we hang onto that keeps us from true love and true life. Die to fear. Die to anger. Die to the resentments you are carrying around with you. Die to anxiety. Be done with it. Let go and just breathe. Just look around. You have all that you need already. Just die to all that other stuff. Right now.

And just to help you remember this I'm going to change our Easter greeting ...just for today 'cause I don't want to get in trouble. When I say "Alleluia Christ is risen." Instead of saying the other thing say, "and so am I, alleluia!"

Alleluia, Christ is risen! And so am I. Alleluia!

Alleluia, Christ is risen! And so am I. Alleluia!

Christ is alive. We are alive. As we come to the Table tonight to share the body and blood of Christ, we taste what being alive tastes like. And in the months and years ahead as we at Trinity Church work and pray and laugh together, as we help those around us who are less fortunate, I know that we will continue to be a family that shows what being alive **IS** like. That is our story.