

Have you ever been in a situation where something is exciting and frightening/scary at the same time? For example: a haunted house, a roller coaster ride, storm waves pounding on the beach, having a baby! There are probably many examples that we could come up with if we spent the next few minutes thinking about them. What about a lightning storm? For me, this is what the fear-of-the-Lord is: An awe-inspiring event or encounter that produces both excitement and the unknown (fear).

We come to Luke's account of the Resurrection of Jesus today. Here in his record we discover the women coming to the tomb and wondering (NIV), or becoming perplexed (NRSV), about what they discover as they enter the place of burial. They are not sure what is happening. The stone has been rolled away, the body is gone and the grave clothes are folded and lying off to the side. They are perplexed /puzzled over all of this. What is happening? Who would steal the body? It was certainly not those who conspired in Jesus' death. They would not want to add any more mystery to his personhood and his place in history. And, like the women, they would not break the Sabbath. They knew it was not any of the followers of Jesus. They knew where they were. And, what would it benefit the Romans to take the body? These and other questions may have been running through their minds along with the major one: What does all this mean? What is happening here?

As they are in the tomb trying to determine what is happening and what to do next, two men suddenly appear in dazzling white garments. This is when the fear comes in. Something frighteningly wonderful is happening. They are being confronted with the glory of God. Should they look? They want to but the light is so dazzling and powerful. The whole world changes in the light of God's glory. Do you remember Moses coming down from the mountain with the tablets of the Law? He has been on the mountain with God for forty days and forty nights. Now he returns to the people having been in God's presence. We read, "*When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord*" (Ex. 34:29). Aaron and those with him could not bear to look at the face of Moses because it was reflecting the glory of God's presence. Now the women are confronted with two men in dazzling glory, reflecting the image and glory of God. It was a frighteningly wonderful experience.

If we look at the Jeremiah text we see the promise of God, "*They shall be my people and I will be their God*" (32:38). Jeremiah says that we will be one heart and one mind – Jesus prayed that we would all be one as he and the father are one. But do you notice the rest of Jeremiah's words? God will put his fear in them. Now in my mind this is not being afraid of God's presence but being dazzled and amazed by it. We stand in amazement that we are in the same place with God. Something frighteningly wonderful will be a part of our lives – We stand amazed in God's presence. We become one because we have experienced the glory of God's presence in our hearts and lives.

Words seem so inadequate to explain or to tell the story of the resurrection. Words never seem quite enough. Experiences are hard to describe in the best of circumstances to those who have not shared them. We have four resurrection stories

and they are each different. Now there are those who feel a need to reconcile the differences. How can we be sure if they are not all the same? But it is the differences that make the stories real to me. None of us see things from the same perspective. We don't even remember events exactly the same. That does not mean that one is wrong and the other is right. It means that we see things differently, experience things differently. As we put the stories together we get a larger scope of what has happened.

Let us look at it another way. How would you describe fear to someone? Or how would you describe glory to another? We were leaving for vacation. This would be our first visit to the Grand Canyon and that region of our country. Our oldest son had visited it a few months earlier and said this was something we had to do. A dear friend took us aside and told us that no picture we had seen, no video we had watched, no image we had imagined would prepare us for our first look over the rim. She was right. Unless you have looked out over the rim and seen the vastness and beauty of the Canyon you cannot begin to imagine its greatness and its beauty. I can only imagine what it must have been for those who saw it for the first time without the benefit of photos or videos! Now apply this to the resurrection. How can words adequately describe finding the tomb empty, the dazzling apparel of the angels, or the power of resurrection? How could one describe what they felt at that moment?

Yes, Jesus had told them. Yet they were not prepared for what they found nor were the other disciples prepared for the news the women brought back. Read verse 11 again. *"But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them as nonsense" (NIV).* *"Their words seemed like an idle tale..." (NRSV).* *"...but the disciples didn't believe a word of it" (The Message).* I like the way Eugene Peterson translates their reaction in the Message! How straight forward is that. They didn't believe it! Sounds a lot like Isaiah 53:1, *"Who has believed our message."*

Peter runs to the tomb and finds things just as the women had told them. The tomb is empty; the grave clothes are folded and just lying there by themselves. But... how can he believe something this frighteningly wonderful? They remember he told them but they still cannot quite comprehend it has really happened. This is too impossible for us to understand or comprehend. Notice how Luke ends this passage, *"...and he (Peter) went away, wondering to himself what had happened" (Luke 24:12b).*

Our God is able to dazzle us. Being in God's presence is something that can only be described as "frighteningly wonderful." It is an experience that cannot adequately be shared with words. Like many of life experiences it has to be experienced before it can adequately be comprehended. Then words are not needed between those who have already experienced it. We have the Gospel records of the resurrection and yet, until Christ becomes real in us they are just that, Gospel records. But once we have met the living Christ and see the dazzling glory of God they become more than stories. They become something frighteningly wonderful.

If we stop and look at the beauty of this world, if we look over the vastness of the Grand Canyon or some other natural wonder, we can only begin to imagine the beauty of what God has prepared for those who love and respond. The Resurrection story reminds us that our God is able to do all things—and our God is frighteningly wonderful.