

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 24th chapter:

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

The Gospel of the Lord!

Sandals flapping, skirts rustling, and spices wafting...like the women, she can hardly be seen in the predawn light. Love is making her way to a grave...because love always dies hard and never right away. Even though you could say it's too late and time to move on, and even though no one even thought through the logistics – Love still has to try to do “something”, and linger just a while longer, to stir its dying embers one more time before it, too, would pass away. Sandals flapping, skirts rustling, spices wafting, and hardly seen in the predawn light, Love made its way to a grave. And isn't that why some of us go there, to the grave of someone we loved? ...To try to do the right thing by making one more trip even though the world says it's too late and maybe time to move on? But Love persists...

The grave...empty! The subject...disappeared! The sight...startling! A surprise is waiting for love. Surprise always catches you off guard. Indeed, what happened to the...guards? Voila! It's empty; the subject's disappeared! Surprise at first perplexes with what seems to be a disappearing act; but just then Surprise makes a dazzling appearance. And now Surprise terrifies Love. This disappearing act is not some clever trick; it is a terrible disturbance. And we don't like it: not here upon hallowed ground, and not now during sacred memories! Surprise has made everything so beyond our ability to understand and manage; we've lost our bearings. This surprise morphs into an unknown fear. Its grave empty, its subject disappeared, its sight startling, a surprise is waiting... Isn't that why some of us are here – because this Resurrection-thing is still so astounding, and we're still trying to make sense out of it? And isn't there something about the surprise of that Easter morn that still makes us...scared? What if it was all just a trick? And what if it wasn't? What are you going to believe really happened? And how are you going to live out what you now believe? Surprise!

Its senses reeling, its thoughts racing, its memory jogging, the Word blurts out the incredible! “He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you: ‘The Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’” And they remembered, and then they told... Its senses reeling, its thoughts racing, its memory jogging, the Word is passed on as unbelievable news! It sure catches people’s attention, but not necessarily belief. I mean, it is just so far-fetched. Risen to life beyond death? Come on! Wishful thinking maybe, but a real truth? Even to the apostles, no less, “these words seemed an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” Its senses reeling, its thoughts racing, its memory jogging, the Word still offers us...the incredible! And Peter can’t help himself; the Word so unbelievable is still the Word so compelling. He has to go and check it out. And isn’t that why we still come here on this day’s morn – to check it out even though, and especially because, the Word is just so incredible? That’s why we’ve come this morning – to peek into the deep mystery of God, to wonder about it all, and to go home still amazed... This Word still astonishes.

Love is finding the way. Surprise blows away. The Word is on its way.
Jesus is risen from the dead!

The Jesus who lived to give God’s Love...but died from having to take all the world’s hate – the Jesus who lived to be the Surprise of new life for us...but died from our regular betrayal and cruel rejection – the Jesus who lived to be the embodiment of God’s holy Word among us...but died with voice silenced and body torn away from us – this Jesus is risen beyond all that sin and death can do to him! Nothing can stop Jesus now!

Today Love is finding the way. Its sandals flapping, its skirts rustling, its spices wafting, God’s Love is finding the way to bring us to the Life beyond all our grief and sorrow.

Today Surprise blows away. Its grave empty, its subject disappeared, its sight startling, God’s Surprise is waiting to blow us away from our sin and death, and to startle us to Life – new, good, full, and free at last!

Today the Word is on its way. Its senses reeling, its thoughts racing, its memory jogging, God’s astounding Word is on the way to call forth “LIFE!”...like we’ve never had it before, but will have it forever because...Jesus lives! And this you can take to your grave!