**Sermon: The Big Reveal**

**Scriptures: John 20:10-18; Luke 24: 13-35**

**Preached: April 16, 2017 at Grove Presbyterian Church by Rev. Merritt N. Schatz**

**Easter Sunday**

I don’t know how many of you enjoy the house renovation shows on tv. I love them! At the beginning of the show a shabby house is chosen. Professionals work on the house. At the end there is a big reveal. The house is usually covered up by signs or a big bus. These are pulled away and the family gasps at the changes, inside and out. They knew it was happening. They expected change. But it is far better than they imagined.

I am not really comparing the resurrection of Jesus to a reality show. But I have to admit that reactions of the families made me think a bit about the reactions of the followers of Jesus to the news the empty tomb and of Christ’s resurrection.

In Luke, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb alone and finds it empty. She tells the disciples that someone has stolen Jesus’ body. Returning with Peter, she stays after he leaves. She weeps in the garden. She doesn’t think of resurrection. Neither did Peter. Both of them had heard Jesus say that Jesus would rise from the dead. Yet the evidence before them, an empty tomb, reveals a reality which is too amazing for them to comprehend. It is only when Jesus calls Mary by name that she begins to see the truth.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus had also heard of the empty tomb, had even heard that some had seen the risen Lord. Uncomprehending, they left Jerusalem. They walked away. Even when Jesus appeared before them, like Mary, they could not recognize him. As he opened the Scriptures to them, the reality of what was happening did not sink in. It was only when Jesus broke the bread and gave it to them, that they saw who he was. In response they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

The reality of the resurrection is just as hard for us to understand and believe fully. It is easier to believe in Good Friday, much as we might want to skip over it. The cruelties and evil in this world make Good Friday easy to believe. These same things make many people skeptical of the resurrection. Even those of us who believe in the resurrection sometimes do not fully grasp its glory. The extraordinary power and grace revealed in the resurrection is downplayed into simple spring happiness of bunnies and candy. It is seen as a bit more than a house reveal but its lasting impact is muted. We enjoy Easter very much and then it is back to life as usual. Where is our daily response to the unique power and glory of this action by God?

At the Good Friday processional we sing the beloved hymn, “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord.” For obvious reasons we do not sing the last verse from that hymn as I remember it from my childhood. “Were you there when he rose up from the grave? Were you there when he rose up from the grave? Oh, oh, oh. Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when he rose up from the grave?”

Do we tremble, really tremble, at the reality that Jesus Christ was raised from the grave? Do we tremble when we remember that God raised Jesus from the reality of death, and so put to death our sins? Do we tremble because God gives us new life in this new life of Christ? Let us tremble at this magnificent news! Life should not go on the same! It is in some ways more challenging, but it is truly more rewarding, more loving, more amazing than ever before. Every day can be different! The trials will continue, but we have confidence that evil will not prevail. God has won the victory over sin and death. We are being changed. We are part of the new creation which has begun in Jesus Christ! Let us tremble at that revelation!

Mary is called by name, and is changed! No longer weeping, she runs to tell the disciples. Other disciples, those who had walked away from the good news, see the sacramental actions of Jesus, and are changed. They run back to Jerusalem and tell the others. This is far bigger, far better than they could ever have expected! They tremble with excitement.

The resurrection calls us to new life. The risen Christ calls us by name to come closer to God, to know that we are loved by God. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be transformed by God closer and closer into the image of Jesus Christ our Savior. As we are transformed in this way, we reveal the image of God in which we are created. We are becoming one with God as Jesus Christ is one with God. Tremble at that wondrous thought! We are not perfect. However, we are loved and redeemed by God. Drawn into the Body of Christ, the family of faith, together we are given the privilege of revealing God to the world, of proclaiming the Good News of salvation through word and deed. Tremble!

Tremble with joy! Tremble with hope! Tremble with the possibilities that come from the reality of the grace that is given in the resurrection! Tremble with the knowledge that this truth and grace belong to us each and every day. Tremble with the reality revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ! This is the best reveal ever!