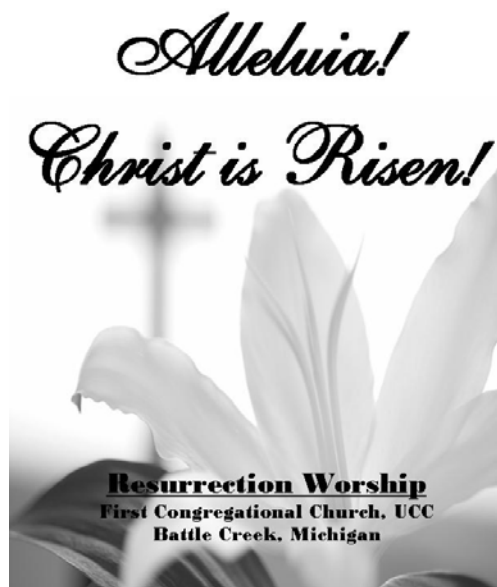


# RESURRECTION EFFECT



**Sunday, April 12, 2009**

Reverend Leah Robberts-Mosser

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## **Resurrection Effect**

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### **EASTER**

People are forever trying to explain the resurrection event. We heard one such account in our scripture lesson today when the guards from the tomb came and talked to the Chief Priests about what they had seen there. The Chief Priests then became “spin doctors” and concocted this story to explain the resurrection event to the people and to appease the Governor. *Tell them that in the middle of the night the disciples came and stole his body; tell them that. That is an explanation that they can believe.* Well, that is one answer. Today in churches all across the world, pastors will get up in the pulpit and they will attempt to explain to worshipers, such as you, the resurrection event.

This week I was reading an Easter sermon that was preached long ago in this very room. It was a sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Carlton Brooks Miller, one of the foundational pastors of our congregation. In this Easter

sermon which was preached later on in his ministry, he says, "When I was a young preacher, I spent many Easters explaining to congregations how the resurrection event happened." He said, "I was so very, very sure of myself. I explained in great detail how it was that the power of God was able to transform a dead, lifeless Jesus into the risen Christ. I was able to explain how it was that the power of God infused his dead and buried body with new life so that he was able to rise again from the dead. I was able to do that." And then as I continued to read -- this was the part of the sermon that knocked me off of my chair -- he said, "I had no idea what I was talking about." I was shocked! I was amazed that the great Rev. Dr. Carleton Brooks Miller would admit he *didn't know* what he was talking about. He didn't know! He had really no real explanation as to how the resurrection event took place -- no clue how that happened.

Well, that is a question for a lot of us, isn't it? We just don't quite know how this took place. But then, for some of us that becomes a problem. There are a lot of things that are unexplained in our faith story; there are a lot of mysteries and unexplainable events. Our faith story is chock full of them. For some of us, that becomes this

thing that hooks us and drags us along: *if I can't explain how it is that the resurrection happened and I don't understand it, then maybe that says something about the kind of faith that I have and maybe I really don't believe after all! Maybe that has something to do with my personal faith, maybe then I can't be a Christian; maybe the fact that I can't explain it gets in the way.* And then there was the moment in his sermon where Carleton Brooks Miller said, "It's not the resurrection event that matters, it is the resurrection effect that matters." The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead on that day is not the real miracle of Easter. The real miracle is that 2,000 years later we are all sitting here.

The disciples, those men, and women, too, who had left their whole lives behind to follow Jesus, they were just ordinary people. They didn't have any special training. They didn't have any education at all. They didn't have any experience in this ministry thing that Jesus had called them to, but there was something about Jesus' invitation to leave their old lives behind and follow him that connected with them and made sense to them and so they did it. They dropped everything, leaving their old lives behind and followed Jesus. The trajectory that their lives were headed in was going to take them right to the

top. They had never seen crowds like the ones that gathered to come and hear Jesus' preaching. They had never seen crowds like the ones that gathered to be healed and to listen to Jesus' teaching. When they came into Jerusalem on that first day of the week, they got a hero's welcome; they came into town and people were calling Jesus the King. They were saying, "You are the King of Israel; Hosanna in the highest! Save us."

And then, the trajectory that they were headed on crashed. The same people who stood in the streets and yelled, "Hosanna, save us" were the people at the end of the week who yelled, "Crucify him! Give us Barabbas! Crucify Jesus!" It was shocking to them – this turn of events was not where they thought they were headed. They thought they were headed to the top. And instead, Jesus was arrested, flogged, beaten, crucified and killed. That's not where they thought they were headed. They were afraid. And so, they ran. They ran.

We hear that story about Peter, the one where Peter denies knowing Jesus – not once, not twice, but three times. I've had moments when I think, "Oh, peter, buck up! Show a little back bone!" But when we pay attention to the story, we figure out that it is not that Peter did not

have any backbone, Peter was afraid for his own life! Surely, if they came and got Jesus and beat him and tortured him and crucified him and killed him, surely they would do the same to anybody who said they knew him. Surely they would do the same to anybody who said that they were followers of Jesus. Surely they would do the same to Peter. So, it's no wonder, really, that Peter denied knowing him. The disciples, they ran, they scattered.

And so, the real miracle of Easter is the fact that when Jesus reappeared to them and said, "I am sending you out in my name to make disciples of all in the world, to baptize people and to preach in my name" – the real miracle of Easter is that they did it. They did it! It is not like the threat of death had gone away; it was still there; it was still very real. The real miracle of Easter is that they were able to move beyond their fear and move beyond their anxiety, and move beyond their trepidation, and move beyond the trauma that they had experienced and go out and do what God had called them to do. That is the real miracle of Easter.

And so, the real Easter miracle happens in each of us when you are able to move beyond the fear in your life,

and beyond the anxiety in your life, and beyond the  
trepidation in your life, and beyond any trauma that you  
have experienced, and live the new life that God is calling  
you to. That is the real miracle of Easter! Not the  
resurrection event, but the resurrection effect in all of  
our lives today, because Christ is risen, indeed.

Alleluia and Amen!

