

Easter Sunrise Service
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

March 27, 2016
Rev. Paul Moore

The Divine Adventure

It had been a very, very long night. In my teenage years it was probably the longest night of my life. Three of us had camped on the top of a mountain under the clear equatorial night sky. I had taken what I had to sleep in, a thin summer bag, a blanket to lay on the ground, and no pillow. It was a full moon and at 9000 ft. in the Andes mountains, it was no summer night. I would drift off to sleep and wake up, and look at the moon that seemed to not have moved at all across the wide arc of the sky. When dawn came it was clear and cold. I could have killed Randy. He woke up, stretched and said, "Wow, what a night, I slept like a baby!" But it was finally morning, the long night was over, and tired as I was, we had the day ahead of us, a day full of promise of great adventures, the three of us boys.

It was not the longest night of my life now, however. Our firstborn, when he was but a babe contracted gastroenteritis. We lived in the jungle of Ecuador, and by the time we could get him to a hospital his little frame was so dehydrated that the nurses could not install an IV drip. Karisse spent the night dribbling Pedialite into his mouth by the teaspoonful, while I walked the halls, worrying. I did sleep, but I couldn't really call it sleep. My heart suffered as we came razor-close to losing our precious boy. To this day it reminds us of just how precious he is, as well as his two brothers. The adventure of life continues for him. He is now an engineer, he makes a good living and he has a wonderful wife and is the father of two of the most precious grandchildren that ever existed.

We have all been through dark nights and the suffering of them has a way of opening us up. They teach us compassion and wisdom. They get us out of our heads and into our hearts. They challenge the dualistic, either-or categorical thinking we normally live in, and they open us up to the adventure of God.

Such was the experience of the people who visited Jesus' tomb on that first Easter morning. Before dawn, it says, like we, gathered here today, before the light of day had brightened in their hearts at the news of the resurrection, the women still labored at the work of love of preparing for the final burial of the one they held so dear. In the dark night of loss, grief, and despair they did what their hearts knew to do, for it was all they could do—they endured the night of suffering. They came to the scene of mourning in the morning to say their final goodbyes. In every way they were still in the night as they approached the tomb.

But when they arrived they found the sun rising. The tomb was empty. That alone would be catastrophic, if it were not for the witness of the angels, but in light of the angelic message the dawn of hope began to send rays of light into their hearts. Maybe, just maybe death was not final for this man, and if for him, then also for us.

Death, the great separator, the great divider, that not only swallows our earthly life at the end of our days, but swallows relationships and good intentions and noble ideals by infecting them with the fear of the loss of importance, status or love and leavening them with ego-driven prideful actions—death becomes the antithesis of life. But Jesus didn't ever live from his ego. He didn't let his pride get in the way. He lived from the place of unconditional love, like his Father, in the love that gathers all things together. Jesus is the one in whom death has no power, for death, the divider, cannot divide Christ. They did not understand it yet, but they knew one thing for certain. The adventure of this life with Jesus wasn't over yet!

Peter, when he heard the women's testimony, was still in darkness. What they said seemed like idle tales, but if the women's words were idle talk, then why did he go to the tomb to check it out? Was it not because the dawn was already beginning to dawn in his heart as well? The empty tomb and the linens, no longer containing the body of Jesus, amazed him.

When we are amazed we are taken out of our comfortable categories; we are moved beyond ourselves. The dawn begins to break after the dark night. It opens us up, breaks the hard shell of our dark hearts, and lets the light in. Here, in this place between and betwixt, between doubt and love, between fear and grace, here the reality of the resurrection can transform us. Here the adventure with the risen Jesus begins.

The sunrise we celebrate this morning is more than the dawn of March 27th, Easter Sunday, 2016. Amazingly enough, it is the dawn of the power of love over ego; the strength of self-giving over selfishness. It is the beginning of the Great Adventure of God and the World. The adventure is a journey of becoming a conscious person, a fully human being, and of learning a way of being in the world that is at once new and ancient, revolutionary and historic, that we might, as T. S. Eliot says, "arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time." It is a way that is free to love as we are loved, to love the work of God in people and the rest of creation, and to work with God in loving.

The adventures of this new life await us. Like the adventures of three teen boys in the country for a day, and the adventures of a babe who is granted a lease on life—whatever the adventure is that is in store for you in the light of the resurrected Christ, it will always be the amazing adventure of divine love.