



Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

Luke 24:1-12

*"Why do you look for the living among the dead?"*

When I was in seminary, I took several classes at the school's farm, which we called the Farminary. It's a place for students to connect their theological education with ecology, to spend some time outside of a classroom, and to learn a little bit about small-scale regenerative agriculture. Our classes would span several hours at the farm, and always involved at least an hour of "farm work," where students helped with planting, weeding, and anything else that needed doing around the farm. During my farm work, I got very well acquainted with the compost pile. The compost pile at the Farminary is not a nice neat little pile, and it isn't fenced in or in a container like some I've seen. Instead, the farminary compost is a massive pile, probably as large as the chancel area in the sanctuary. Compost from the community is gathered and brought to the farm, where it is added to the pile. And then it sits, and we wait. Sometimes, people working at the farm might mix the pile a little, but generally it just sits there. And then, something happens. Compost is part magic trick and part miracle to me because somehow, through many scientific processes that I don't fully understand, what once was junk—rotten vegetables and eggshells and grass clippings—becomes soil that nourishes new life in the garden. It becomes something with purpose. It is transformed.

Easter reminds me a lot of a compost pile. Somehow, between the grief and pain of Friday and early Sunday morning, what was dead has been fully transformed into a source of life and hope. The power of God has triumphed over the power of sin and death. What was impossible has been made possible. The hope that everyone thought was dead was just waiting to be transformed. It just needed some resurrection.

When the women come to the tomb that first Easter, gathered early in the morning like we are today, they are faced with a mystery: an empty tomb, two figures in dazzling outfits, and a question: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

This question, to me, is a haunting one, not only for what it adds to the narrative of this resurrection story but because of what it means for me, for us, and for our communities. Where are the places that we have continued to look for the living among the dead? Where are the places and people and things we have continued to place our value and purpose in? What are the things—the habits, the relationships, the narratives we tell ourselves—that suck life and joy and fulfillment from us that we still, for some reason, return to time and time again.

Put another way, what are the things we need to put in the compost pile? What are the things that need to be resurrected?

Christ is arisen and we shall arise. We get to join in the work of resurrection too. Resurrection takes the eggshells and vegetable scraps of our life and transforms them, but we have to let it happen. We have to stop looking for the living among the dead. We have to be willing to give up the things of earth that drag us down, that cause division, that separate us from God and our neighbors.

In the hope of the resurrection, there is freedom. Freedom to trust that the power of Christ, the one who overcame death, can bring new life to us. We can give up tending our trash heaps and turn them into compost—into something with purpose, something that joins in the work of resurrection by bringing new hope and life into the world. This isn't a reversal, or something we take lightly. It doesn't mean we forget our past feelings of pain and grief. It doesn't mean we forget those who we have lost. We still carry those wounds with us. But it also means that those wounds, those hurts, are not our defining features. As we sit in the compost, as we sit in the light of the resurrection, we get to discover who we will become as we experience this good news for ourselves. Thanks be to God.

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