

I would like to say a word in favor of dull routine – doing the things that only get done because you are supposed to do them. Profound things happen in the midst of dull routine. Exciting things can work their way into life when there is not much going on that is exciting.

The women who went to the tomb were not excited when they woke up that morning. It was a dull routine ritual that they were going to perform – just what was expected of them. It would be done with no excitement – certainly no celebration.

Luke writes, “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.” A job that is to be done at daybreak, in a tomb. It does not sound like much of a celebration to me.

We have lost the feeling those women must have had when they found the empty tomb. Not the belief, but the *surprise* – the split-second reversal of a dull routine.

We woke up this morning in a far different mood than the women must have had in this morning’s Gospel lesson. We woke up and we knew it was Easter. It said so on the calendar. We have been making plans; this is an exciting day. We have been pointing toward this since Ash Wednesday back in February.

This is a great day; but it is not much of a surprise.

The women we read about who went to the tomb – they had made plans for Sunday morning, too. They had been making plans since the Friday before. They knew there were some things that were *supposed* to be done – one duty after another.

There had been a quick burial because the sun was almost down on the Sabbath and they could not have a burial on the Sabbath. Then there had been the routine of the Sabbath Day – the prayers. They could at least get the spices ready. Then the next day, there would be the routine of anointing the body.

Jesus was dead. There was no excitement. That Sabbath would be spent just going through the motions, waiting for the next day and the task that would take them to the cemetery. They would mouth the prayers, but I wonder if they really felt like praying.

On the first Easter the followers of Jesus were not celebrating. They went to the tomb out of dull routine. They did not expect anything but a corpse, but they went through the motions of what they were supposed to do.

God bless them, they *did* go through the motions. So, I would like to say a word in favor of dull routine. Those women had an idea of what was expected of them – at least they knew what they expected of themselves – and they did it.

They kept themselves at their religious routine even in this tragedy of Jesus' death. Mousing prayers they perhaps did not feel. Observing a Sabbath when they felt abandoned by God.

And – while they were shut up in their homes, observing the Sabbath, preparing the spices in dull, hopeless routine – **God was preparing *them*.**

They set themselves to doing their duty, and they found themselves at an empty tomb. Jesus is alive and death is defeated.

Everything changed in an instant.

But they were there because they had set themselves to doing a distasteful, routine task.

I think that can tell us something about distasteful, routine tasks. And it can tell us something about God. We all wake up sometimes with no more to look forward to than the women had on that first Easter morning. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and some others. They had set themselves a duty that was so inconsequential that even Jesus' apostles were not going to participate.

And we sometimes look at the day before us and sometimes it is not something anyone else will be able to do. And it is not something anyone else will be interested in.

Today is a celebration – but tomorrow? Back to work. For many of us sitting here it will be the day-in-day-out routine. Work, home, maybe school. Talk to the same people. See the same faces, the same walls. Maybe something a little different will come in the mail, probably not. We will pray our prayers. We will have our meetings, and take care of our responsibilities and do the things we feel we are supposed to do and next week come back to church.

Do not let that sound dreary. If I have just described your week – that is wonderful. God bless you. Go about the routine. Observe all the rituals; pray all the prayers even when you are not in the mood. Even when **you** cannot make the old habits give you any excitement.

All the real excitement, all the really important things, are planned by God. We do not create anything important. We *can* try to see what God wants us to do. The women had no plans beyond their routine – *God* did – and the tomb was empty.

I think there are a lot of exciting empty tombs in our lives that go unnoticed because we are not willing to go to the graveyard. It sounds like dull routine and we plan more exciting things for ourselves. We depend upon ourselves to find God and who would look for him in a graveyard?

We can only plan so much excitement and joy for ourselves. If God has the chance, he will overcome our expectations.

You know what happens when we decide where God will be, and where he will not. When we decide what is most exciting. The words we so often hear when we decide what is worth our efforts: “I don’t have the energy to help.” “I don’t get along with those people.” “I don’t see how that will make any difference.” “I’ll forgive them as soon as they act like

they deserve it.” “I’ve done my share.” “My parents used to make me do that.” “I have too many other things to do.” “Well, I know I should, but...”

When we hear those thoughts – imagine one more to go along with them, “I know I should, but what good will these spices do him now? He’s been dead since Friday.”

God will overcome anything we expect. Do not depend upon yourself for surprise and excitement. Let God handle the surprises. He is good at it.

We see the lives of people who depend upon themselves for meaning and happiness. People who try one thing after another, looking for excitement. Discarding one philosophy after another looking for meaning. Going through life looking for different people, different directions, always bored, always disappointed.

We cannot depend upon ourselves to defeat that kind of death. That is for God. Let’s put our routine lives in God’s hands and see what happens.

Go about the routine. When you feel God wants you to do something, set it before yourself and do it. This morning, pray the prayers – again. If they sound hollow to you, God will fill them.

Take communion – again. You have done it before. It might start to get routine.

Speak the words that Jesus taught us in the Lord’s Prayer – again.

Hear the story of the resurrection – again.

Every routine, here at church and throughout your life, every person you see, every time your telephone rings, every time you open a book, every time you sit down to one more meal with the same people you have seen forever ... you are living your life in a world where God is alive and you do not have any idea what is about to happen.

God will come with his life in ways we cannot imagine.

He will speak wisdom to us from some member of our family. He will teach us to forgive someone we were going to hate forever. He will give us strength when we are tired.

He will show us some way to make someone's life better. God will give you insight into what someone else is saying. He will give you understanding of what someone else is thinking.

You cannot plan God's life; he will. Just live the routine of your days. Do what you know God wants you to do. Fulfill your responsibilities. Live right here in our world where everyone depends upon you to do the same old things.

God is alive. He is part of your life. He is part of everything you do. All the routine of your days is inhabited by the living God himself. Out of the grave and interested in your routine. Alive and living in you.