

Pastor Christa von Zychlin
Easter 2019 April 21, 2019

Luke 24:1-12

Easter *started* as a complete fail.

I wonder how many of you have had a complete fail in your life.

A failed pregnancy. I heard from one of my former Baptist students from Myanmar last week *Tun* – a cheery little guy with a big grin, with responsibility for a church of over a thousand people – *Tun* wrote me that his wife is suffering from an ectopic pregnancy, a pregnancy where a baby starts growing in the wrong place in a woman's body.

Would you pray for us please, *Tun* asked.

Tun and his wife have a nine year old son, and oh how much they wanted to have a second child. *Tun* was gone from home for three years finishing his education in Hong Kong at the Lutheran Seminary there, and returned only last summer to Myanmar...

when he comes back, he and his wife thought, *maybe then God will bless us with a second child, a child of joy.*

An embryo can't survive an ectopic pregnancy. It's a failed pregnancy; and it's dangerous for the mom, too;

+++

When I was a missionary in Africa, there was a cement cross which marked a grave, all by itself, on a little hill. I thought of her often ... this dead missionary woman whose name I've forgotten. Here she had traveled all the way to Africa, to bring the light of Jesus to people, and instead, *she* had had an ectopic pregnancy which she probably would have survived, had she been near good doctors in the USA.

It was a pregnancy fail, it was a medical fail, it was a mission fail. All those books she had packed to teach basic science and reading to kids who had no schools... some of those book boxes were still mouldering in the Women's Center in Cameroon when I arrived, twenty years later.

And there are other kinds of failures

This was the week of the devastating fire in the beautiful Notre Dame cathedral in Paris... (some of you have probably been there, climbed the bell tower, stood in front of those gorgeous stained glass rose windows.)

Fingers are being pointed at epic failures in protecting the cathedral. Of course it's always easy to point fingers after the fact. Benjamin Mouton, the architect who oversaw the design of the fire safety system [acknowledged officials had misjudged](#) how quickly a flame could spread through the cathedral. They thought the ancient oak beams in its attic would burn slowly. How wrong they were.

Some say there was a computer glitch in the alarm system

And others say even if the alarm would have worked perfectly, there was a built-in delay of twenty minutes as the system, afraid of false alarms, was *designed* so that one guy had to physically climb into the tower and verify whether there was an actual fire and the first guy who went up to check, saw nothing and said, all's clear, false alarm.

And the borders are failing. While we celebrate Easter, we can't forget or ignore young refugee families, - and some of you have been helping with them this very week -- many of them fellow Christians, real people, are experiencing real suffering as our systems are failing them and us.

Lord how can you allow such failures take place: physical failures, systemic failures, failures of the heart and mind.

+++

Oh how many failures we see in the life of Jesus, as it's told in the last chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

There's Judas. It's not by accident, or in a sudden moment of fear that Judas betrays Jesus...

Judas *actively* goes out to look for those who want to kill Jesus,

Was it maybe *Jesus'* failure to pick Judas as one of his disciples?

A little later Jesus asks the remaining disciples, to all stay awake and pray; that night, they *need* spiritual protection.

And what do they do? They all fall asleep. Fail.

Then when the guards come up to arrest Jesus, one of the disciples takes a sword, cuts off a poor soldier's ear.... *NO*, says Jesus. *No more of this*.

Again, hasn't anyone been listening to Jesus? Christians don't solve violence with more violence. *No more of this!* says Jesus.

And then
we have Peter, wonderful Peter, ridiculous Peter.

"I'll go to prison with you and even to death!"

He's proud to say this, in front of the other disciples.
He's the Rock, right! He's Disciple Number One, right?

Then, Three times, Peter denies he's ever met the guy they call Jesus.

Epic Fail.

Pilate fails.. he didn't really want to condemn Jesus. Pilate knows Jesus is innocent:

Herod interrogates Jesus, that was a failure, too, because Jesus refused to answer .

And then Jesus himself ... Jesus failed.

It's a failed King, who is hit, insulted, spit on,

It's a failure of all that is good and right, when nails pierce his hands and his feet.

And then the sun failed.
And then the curtain of the temple failed, as it ripped in two.
And then,
even Jesus' lungs failed
as he breathed his last.

++++

This morning, though, some women come to carry out the old burial tradition: to anoint his body with spices...

That's a failure too because -- there's no body to be found...

--then two angels come and tell them what the *real* fail is:
Women! You are looking for the living among the dead...

--then these women are the first to remember Jesus words:

"and on the third day," [Jesus said (Lk 9:22)] "the Son of Man will be raised from the dead."

And suddenly, these women – Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Maria the mother of James, -- aren't failures anymore.

they are *witnesses* to the greatest gift of love the world has ever seen:

Jesus has been raised from the dead. He's not a failure, he's the Son of God and the King of Life.

The women run to tell these things to the men...
Who.... completely fail to believe .

Except, now, Peter. Ridiculous Peter, wonderful Peter -- Peter runs to the tomb... he wonders what's happened?
and as he wonders, he begins to remember

and remembering is the beginning of faith.

+++

People of Trinity Lutheran Church of Las Cruces,

Easter is about human failure of all kinds

But then Easter is remembering the power of God to bring life to the dead, and faith out of failure.

The faith of my former student Tun to believe in the power of prayer to console.
The faith of the parishoners of Notre Dame, that the beauty of stained glass windows & soaring architecture is worth rebuilding as a witness to the beauty of Christ

The faith of missionaries even now spreading education and the true Gospel.
The faith of men & women who are even now working to bring kindness & medical care for local homeless and asylum seekers right here in Las Cruces.

So let us, like Peter, wonder.
and, remember

and

believe what the women testified.

What the Easter angels declare
what the Living Lord promises.

Let's celebrate, this Easter - the One who overcomes even our worst failures,
with the promise of victorious New Life in Jesus' name. AMEN.