

## **Sermon Notes for Easter Sunday 2010**

### **My subject this morning is amazement.**

Let me begin with something amazingly stupid.

### **A man in Michigan who does not believe death is final**

Robert Ettinger is a father of cryonics

He has 95 frozen people in his facility.

They rest in sleeping bags, upside down, in liquid nitrogen, six to a tank.

His mother and two wives are there.

He is 91 and plans to join them, by his own hand if life gets too difficult.

Expects to be defrosted in 50-100 years and made young again.

Mourns for the “lost;” an almost religious fervor.

A man who believes in the power of death and thinks he has the solution.

I’d rather be dead than in his hands.

### **It is easier to believe in death than in cryonics.**

We have seen it on many levels.

We have lost those we love;

We have seen dreams die;

We pray almost every week for another round of young men and women lost to war.

We are convinced that death is real.

It is also easier to believe in death than in the Resurrection.

### **The only rational response to the news of Resurrection is disbelief.**

We see it in the Bible.

These people knew death as well.

When the women found an empty tomb, they were “perplexed” not convicted.

The women heard from the angels, but did not see the Risen Lord.

When the women told the men what the angels had said, they thought it an “idle tale.”

Even Peter left the empty tomb with amazement rather than faith.

### **So this gospel lesson a story about people who *heard* about the Resurrection and still weren’t sure.**

Who wrestled with doubt.

Who wondered if they could trust the word of others.

A people whose incipient Easter faith was almost choked by their faith in death.

**The word we have is not mere rumor: the word of the church, the tradition of the apostles.**

There is nothing more certain in the teaching of the New Testament than the Resurrection.

Not sure about the birth story; okay to quibble with a few other miracles.

But Peter's preaching in Acts; God raised him on the third day!

Paul's insistent message in 1 Corinthians 15: If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

**But the beginning of Easter faith, all we need today, is a small crack in our faith in death**

Such Peter showed simply by going to the tomb.

Didn't believe the women.

Knew the power of death.

But he ran to the tomb to see what could be found.

**There is a crack in his faith in death, enough for the Holy Spirit to blow right through.**

**Many things got you here this morning.**

Family tradition.

Beautiful music.

A tenuous connection to the faith of your childhood.

Like Peter, you may have come here mostly to confirm your doubt.

Or to confirm your faith in the power of death.

**I am not capable of convincing you.**

My hope is not that you leave here with a fully orthodox faith, each line of the Creed checked off.

But I hope you leave here as Peter and the women left the tomb, amazed.

Amazement, wonder, those are the beginning of Easter faith.

Wonder is the first punch in our fight against death.

Modern people who think the world so readily explained and manipulated are not good at wonder. Thus Robert Ettinger.

But wonder is the bridge from faith in death to faith in the Risen Lord.

**If nothing else, I'll settle for this: Leave here today with wonder and amazement that *anyone* believes in the Resurrection.**

If you leave here with even that bit of amazement and wonder, you will begin to know that death does not explain all things

You will be on a path to knowing that you do not have to come up with your own memorial or antidote to death.

**If you are given the gift of wonder and amazement, treasure it.**

**God can do much with that sense of wonder in time;**

**Transforming the wonder of the empty tomb into the fullness of life in communion with the Risen Lord, who loves you, and wants to share his new life with you.**