

Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Oh it is such a glorious day to be together, such a wonderful time to be the church. Not that every day isn't glorious and not that every day isn't a wondrous day to be the church. But this day is different from all the rest. This day we arrive to worship in our very best as we rejoice in God's very best. For Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Easter really is a day that compels us to do that little extra as we get ready for the day. Everything is just a little... more. The energy we feel, the extra bouncy steps of the kids, the big smiles on our faces, the delicious food that awaits us back at our homes – everything is just that little bit more on Easter. We even gather in worship adorned with big hats, neat and clean suits with ties, bright sun dresses, and fancy shoes. The occasion seems to call us to more and we respond in all the ways we know how, because today is a day of more – more than we deserve, more than we expected, more of God's goodness and grace in the world.

But what has become a day of more for us was not always that way. The disciples certainly did not feel that way. They were still reeling from the shock of the past few days, when their Lord was betrayed, arrested, condemned, and executed on the cross. This was certainly not a day of more, but a day that felt hallow and empty. And as if things couldn't have gotten any worse, Mary Magdalene, came running to them with news that the tomb was empty. We hear about the empty tomb and we're filled with excitement and joy; but when the disciples first heard it, they were filled with dread. Perhaps someone had taken the body. Perhaps it was one last dig from the Roman state or religious elites to hide the body of their Lord. But a moment of excitement and joy, this was not.

And yet, I cannot help but wonder why John and Peter ran. I mean the Gospel of John makes the point that John and Peter ran – sprinted even – to the tomb. “The two were running together and John outran Peter to reach the tomb first.” Which seems like a strange detail to include. Except that it leads us to believe that they weren't really “running together” like they were jogging buddies; they were racing. They were going as fast as they could to get to the tomb, which Mary had told them was empty. And I wonder, why? Why were they racing? What thoughts raced through their minds as their feet raced to the empty tomb?

When I was a kid, one of my favorite movies was called *The Sandlot*. And in the movie there was a kid who wore shoes called PF Flyers, which were “guaranteed to make a kid run faster and jump higher.” And as a young kid, I too wanted to run faster and jump higher. So whenever I'd a new pair of shoes, I'd patiently wait while my mom would focus on the unimportant things – you know, like whether they fit right or not. Pssh! Once she was done sizing them, that's when the real test began. I was that kid at the local Kohl's racing up and down the aisles to see if the shoes made me fast enough; I was the kid jumping up and down, testing them out to see if they made me jump higher. I was the kid who ran around the store with hope that these would be the ones to take me to the next level – to lead me to the more I was longing for.

We're conditioned in our world to seek more. But where we often miss the road is that the things of our lives won't lead us to the more we desire. The things we have and want to have will not satisfy the hope for more that fills our hearts with longing. As John and Peter race to the empty tomb, it's natural to assume that they ran out of fear – and maybe that's true. But I cannot help but think that it was hope that urged them on, faster and faster. I do not doubt that they feared Mary's report to be true, but I also suspect that the Spirit of God was at work deep within them in ways they couldn't yet fully understand. I think deep down they hoped the tomb would be empty. Because some part of them did remember that Jesus told them it would be this way. Some part of them hoped there would be more to the story. Some part of them hoped that out of emptiness they would know fully the goodness that this day brings.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, hope does not depend on what is seen or known or understood. In fact, at times, hope can feel beyond rationality. Hope blooms out of our desire for something to be different, something to be transformed by a power beyond our own. Hope leads us to believe that goodness is stronger than evil, that forgiveness is greater than hate, and that love wins. Hope leads us to believe in impossibilities, like life coming out of death. Hope is what urges us to run as fast as we can to an empty tomb. Hope is what urges us to seek the more that our hearts desperately long for. Hope is why on this day of more, we boldly declare in faith, Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!