

The Rev. Heidi Haverkamp
The Episcopal Church of St. Benedict
Easter Sunday – April 4, 2010
Luke 24:1-12

A friend said to me this past week that being a Christian is a lot like being Alice in Wonderland.¹ And that struck me, and although I haven't been out to see the new movie, I haven't been able to stop thinking about it.

But sometimes when I'm in church or when I'm reading the bible or on a day like Easter Sunday, I listen to the things we're saying here, and I see the things we're doing, and I look around and I feel like Alice that I've fallen down a rabbit hole into a strange other world where nothing makes sense.

For all that Christianity can seem like a given in our society, something so ordinary that its holidays, holy stories, and symbols are made into chocolate figurines, cartoon characters, and lawn decorations,

Christianity is really a radical and crazy religion. Christianity invites us to live an upside-down world:

where might does not make right,

where there is more to the world than what we can see, buy, or prove,

and where people can come back from the dead.²

In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice is not at home in the strange world she's fallen into, as she confesses to the Cheshire Cat. And in her words I can't help but hear someone talking about being part of a church community!

Alice: But I don't want to go among mad people.

The Cat: Oh, you can't help that. We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.

Alice: How do you know I'm mad?

The Cat: You must be. Or you wouldn't have come here.

Are we all mad here? Is that why we came here this morning?

A man was killed on a cross, buried in a cave with a guard assigned to keep watch at the door, and two days later, his tomb was empty.

To hear the story of Jesus is to hear a mad story of an upside-down world. Listen and think about it and see what you think:

A virgin gives birth to a child in a barn and lays him in a feedbox.

He grows up and turns water into wine.

He tells a woman at a well that he has something he calls living water and if she drinks it she'll never be thirsty again.

He tells a Temple priest named Nicodemus something unintelligible about being born of the Spirit.

He calls a dead man named Lazarus to walk out of his tomb.

¹ The Rev. Bradley Pace, referring to a sermon by The Rev. Joy Rogers.

² adapted from a piece by David Lose, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0c2inXKD6PI>, "Easter is Coming..."

Then he gives himself up to be arrested and brought to a show trial before uptight local religious leaders, the arrogant, puppet king, Herod, and then the distant and brutal Roman governor, Pilate, who is both bored and intrigued by this man Jesus who refuses to answer his questions.

It's a rabbit hole. We've fallen down a rabbit hole.

Which reminds me:

When Bishop Lee visited us a few weeks ago, he talked about the Greek word for the door of a tomb – and told us that it is the same as “narrow door” or “narrow gate,” the way that Jesus tells us to take to find our way to the kingdom of God.

Strive to enter through the narrow door...

a narrow door, the opening of a cave that has been carved into the rock as a tomb, a narrow passageway, a rabbit hole...

The funny thing is, in the gospel of Luke, when the women and Peter go through the narrow door and into Jesus' tomb, they don't actually meet Jesus.

There are two messengers, who ask them another upside-down question:

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" The thing is, the women weren't looking for the living at all. They had brought spices to anoint the body. The body. They were looking for *the dead*.

But the outlandish words of the messengers help them remember the outlandish words of Jesus. And suddenly, they believe something has happened.

They go through the door of the tomb and come out again, changed.

Then, the other disciples, who haven't been looking for Jesus at all, dead or alive, don't believe them. (I can hear them saying to themselves, "I don't want to go among mad people"!)

But when Peter goes to see for himself -- when he walks through that narrow tomb door and runs home again – something happens.

Luke doesn't say he understands; just that he is “amazed.”

It's Easter and we've gone down the rabbit hole with Jesus.

We've come out the other side – to wonderful upside down place:

where might does not make right,

where there is more to the world than what we can see, buy, or prove,

and where people can come back from the dead.

On this side is new life, a risen Christ, a world where love wins out over death, where outlandish words and unbelievable events point out to us the true reality of human life and God's love.

Maundy Thursday this year came on the same day as April Fool's Day, and that made perfect sense to me.

Easter Sunday, today, is the 42nd anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who also lived in an upside-down, radical way and who also paid for it with his death. But who changed our nation more than he ever could have if he'd been sensible and stayed home where it was safe.

Welcome to the upside-down world of the Risen Christ.
What makes sense, and what doesn't make sense?

Alice said, "But I don't want to go among mad people."
And the cat replied, "Oh, you can't help that. We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
And Alice said, "How do you know I'm mad?"
The Cat said, "You must be. Or you wouldn't have come here."

Christ is Risen.
Alleluia!