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Several months ago, when my son Jonathan visited, we went on a family ancestry tour of cemeteries, visiting the graves of long-ago Cripe family members. We first stopped at West Goshen Cemetery, where Daniel Cripe is buried, an ancestor who died in the mid-1800s. Next, we went to Violet Cemetery where my great-grandparents and grandparents are buried. As we took this tour, we didn't expect anything unusual to happen. I shared memories of my grandparents, recalling the fun times I had growing up near them.

I imagine the women who visited Jesus' tomb were on a similar trek, though they had taken sweet smelling spices, possibly frankincense or what was called the balm of Gilead, possibly from the Balsam fir tree. They brought these spices to anoint the body, used as a way of embalming the body. I imagine they were telling stories about Jesus, and although not actually related by family blood lines, they may have felt like family to Jesus after several years of following him and listening to him tell parables about what God is like.

They may have wondered how they would gain entrance to the tomb, but when they arrived, they discovered the stone covering the entrance to the

cave-like tomb had already been rolled away. Maybe they wondered if someone had arrived earlier with spices, hoping to join them in the ritual of caring for the dead. They would have never expected to find the tomb empty, for that would have been as surprising as if my son and I had found on our visit to local cemeteries a hole in the ground with an open casket.

The women who visited Jesus' tomb found two men with dazzling clothes suddenly standing beside them. The women were terrified, as I think most of us would feel in a similar situation. The men reminded them, "Remember how Jesus said he would rise from the dead, so why are you looking for the living among the dead? He's not here!"

I imagine it felt like a light bulb going on over their heads as they suddenly began to make sense of what was going on. He's still alive! They excitedly ran to tell the other disciples what had happened, who thought what they said was nonsense. Wouldn't you be a bit skeptical hearing similar news? If my son and I had witnessed such an event on our graveyard visits and told my family, I'm sure they would have been doubtful. Who would believe such a story?

Good ole Peter, however, who had before doubted Jesus after his capture by the soldiers, quickly ran to the

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tomb, found it empty except for the burial clothes, and returned. He was still wondering what had happened.

When we experience something amazing, a similar sense of wonder may often be our response. *What just occurred? How did that happen?* We may need time to ponder the experience, letting the images rumble through our minds.

At some point we may finally “wake up” and get it as we begin to grasp the enormity of the event. The Persian poet Hafiz captured this sense of waking up in his poem entitled “What Happens.”

What happens when your soul
Begins to awaken
Your eyes
And your heart
And the cells of your body
To the great Journey of Love?

First there is wonderful laughter
And probably precious tears

And a hundred sweet promises
And those heroic vows
No one can ever keep.

But still God is delighted and amused
You once tried to be a saint.

What happens when your soul
Begins to awake in this world

Ultimate Healing: Dare to Dance
April 4, 2021 Easter

To our deep need to love
And serve the Friend?

O the Beloved
Will send you
One of His wonderful, wild companions ~
Like Hafiz.¹

Maybe you can serve as that wonderful companion to someone, helping the person to “wake up” and sense God’s presence, not just on Easter, but on every day of life. Eventually Jesus’ followers did wake up and begin to grasp the amazing news of resurrection, for their life had been transformed, and I imagine they felt like dancing after having watched their beloved teacher and friend die on a cross suddenly appear among them.

After we have gone through a year of confusion and distress with this pandemic, many of us may feel like dancing now that some restrictions have begun to lift, and yet, we hear cautions that all is not well, that some parts of our country and the world are beginning to see an increase once again. Maybe what we need now is a slow dance, swaying gently in God’s love, continuing to wait until we can break out in a fast dance.

While we slowly dance in anticipation, look around to sense what God is doing, as one young boy discovered while on a camping trip with his dad. His father explained:

Rev. Dr. Douglas Cripe
Central Christian Church, Elkhart & First Christian Church, Mishawaka

Luke 24:1-12

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One time my young son and I went on an overnight camping trip for the first time. While it was still quite dark, I arose and started a fire. Then I woke up my sleeping son. After protesting a little, he got up. He stood near the fire trying to keep warm as we waited, for he knew we had come to witness the sunrise.

Soon it began! The blackness in the east gradually turned to gray, then the gray turned to blue. The image of a lake and shadowy trees began to emerge out of the darkness. The blue turned to a near-white color. Finally pink, violet, and orange hues emerged in the east over the pines! Suddenly the valley was flooded with light. We watched this spectacular display in silent awe.

Finally my son could stand it no longer. He turned to me and wistfully said, “Dad, do it again! Do it again!”

The father commented after reflecting on this experience: “Don’t you sometimes feel that way about Easter? To be sure it is a once-for-all happening in terms of the victory won in Christ.

Yet Easter is needed many, many times in our lives. So we would say with my son, ‘Do it again. Do it again.’”²

That’s the amazing thing about Easter, God does it over and over again—not just once a year on Easter, but every day, every week. Each time we make a mistake and mess up our lives. Each time we forget to tell someone about our love. Each time we say something unkind. Each time someone hurts us. God invites us to “wake up,” to recall the Easter story, to offer kind words of forgiveness to one another, to know that resurrection happens repeatedly, and invites us to dare to dance again. So, put on your dancing shoes, fire up the music, for even in a pandemic we know that ultimate healing occurs through the risen Christ. Get ready to dance this Easter season and throughout the year and we experience ultimate healing.

¹ *I Heard God Laughing: Poems of Hope and Joy*, Renderings of Hafiz by Daniel Ladinsky, 12.

²Hodgin, Michael. *1001 More Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers*. Zondervan. Kindle Edition #282, adapted.