

Sometimes we see it coming.

Most times we don't.

Most times we get hit over the head
and we are surprised.

Surprised by joy.

Surprised by loss.

Surprised that things have changed.

It can all happen in just the smallest little minute.

Sitting on the front porch,
in the spring air,

and you hear the words you never wanted to hear.

The life you built,

the expectations you had,

what you *KNEW* was true.

And it's all gone.

But it's not just loss.

The best things happen that way too,

sneaking up and surprising you

with a joy you didn't really believe was possible.

You show up

and find that there is more than you ever would've believed.

Just when you were sure
you had it all figured out.
Just when you were sure
that nothing good was going to come your way.
New life comes bounding out of the tomb.
Resurrection comes shining out of the darkness.

It has happened to you.
A hundred times over it's happened.

Hopefully there's only a few that you can remember.
A few of the times
when you thought your life was over.
And a few of the times
when you realized that your life was always just beginning.

We can live through a lot,
and there is a lot that can make us live.
But we are rarely ready for any of it.

There is one word that appears in Mark's Gospel over and over again.
"Immediately."
Immediately Jesus heard a voice from heaven.
Immediately Jesus was driven out into the desert.
Immediately the man's sight was restored.
Everything changes.
All at once.
Ready or not.
And it will make your heart leap up into your throat.
Immediately.

The disciples were never ready.
They were just never ready.
They weren't ready for life;
they weren't ready for death.
And they sure weren't ready
for what happened there at the end of it all.
There at the beginning of new life.

They started out well enough.
Jumping up from their nets,
following him down the beach,
immediately.
And then the healing
and the miracles
and the power to cast out demons,
immediately.

And they were so excited
that they didn't know what to do with themselves.
They knew what to do with Jesus.
They told him to come in out of the desert
and keep on healing,
keep on being powerful.

But they just never knew what to do with themselves
when he made it clear
that it was all going to just keep on changing.

There is a problem
with the way a lot of us look at how God comes into our lives.

We sometimes think that there must be A PLAN,
one plan
that God has for us,
and that it's our job to somehow figure that out.

But again and again,
it is made clear to us
that God shows up wherever we are.

God is the God of all of our changes,
and just keeps showing up,
every time we get surprised.

Sometimes we're surprised by death,
other times we're surprised by life.
Either way;
God is there.

You can buy a hundred books and listen to a thousand sermons.
But I think you can just about boil it down to this:
God shows up,
again and again.

God shows up:
blessing us with life
and redeeming all of our death.

Standing up on that mountain,
Peter wanted to build a few houses.
He wanted to stay put
 where he saw Jesus shining out from the darkness.
He wanted hunker down
 and forget about all that darkness down the mountain.
Forget all the promises that Jesus made
 about going to Jerusalem
 and dying
 and living again.

Every time something good happened,
 Jesus healed the sick
 or they heard the voice of Almighty God,
every time
 Peter wanted to sit there like a rock.
And every time,
 Jesus kept reminding him
 that things were going to change.

God shows up in the changes.
Shows up in our life,
and shows up when we haven't got one bit of life left in us.
God shows up.

Next week is the beginning of Lent.
We will change to a new season.
But you know what else?
Tomorrow is Monday.
And things will change.

And the next day,
and the day after that.
And every day,
in every one of those changes,
God is there.

God shows up:
out of the darkness,
shining a light;

out of death,
calling us to new life.