

I have one thing to say.  
Simple but difficult.  
Hard to hear really.

My only job today  
is to make an announcement:  
*sometime before sunrise this morning,  
God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.*

See, I know it's hard to hear.  
Announcements are always hard to hear.  
We print them in the bulletin,  
and then as if you can't read,  
I stand up here and read them off.

Preachers are repetitive by definition.  
I repeat myself up here.  
Resurrection, nearly every week.  
I repeat other preachers.  
After all, there's only so many ways to say it.

Even this morning, I borrowed from Fred Craddock:  
"sometime before sunrise this morning,  
God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead."

We repeat our sermons and our announcements  
over and over so that you'll hear,  
but really it might work the other way;  
maybe it keeps you from hearing at all.

Again, in the words of Fred Craddock,  
"If I wanted to make somebody deaf,  
I'd do it by repetition."

Jesus knew it too:  
say something often enough  
and nobody'll really hear it.

He said that spreading the good news  
was like spreading seed out on the ground.

Some of the seed  
will get thrown down on the kind of soil  
that's run back over so many times  
that the ground becomes like concrete.

The seeds will just lie there  
and it won't get planted,  
nothing will happen  
until the pigeons come along looking for food.

Who finds this announcement easy to hear?  
It's Easter Day  
and how many of us will go home  
amazed at new life?

Most of us will just be happy that it didn't rain.  
I'll be happy about how many people came to church.  
Nobody thinks it's easy to hear.  
The angel said, "Do not be afraid."  
Jesus says it too.

And who wouldn't be afraid?  
"His appearance was like lightning  
and his clothing white as snow."  
There was an earthquake too.  
It's not easy to hear.

They ran off scared.  
They went away not sure what to believe.  
And then they ran into Jesus.  
And you know,  
he said it too,  
"Do not be afraid!"

Well how's anybody going to do that?  
It's the end of the world  
and the beginning of a new one.

Of course we're afraid of that!

“Do not be afraid.”

But we don't hear it.

It gets lost in the repetition.

It'll get pecked up by the pigeons.

The gospel seed will fall down on concrete.

Unless

...unless there's some part of us that's torn up.

Even concrete gets cracked.

Ground hard as iron can get turned over and torn apart.

That's when we wind up hearing it

- when we're all torn apart.

That's when the gospel sounds like good news.

When your world is ending,

a new one sounds just fine.

What part of you is torn apart right now?

What piece of you isn't covered over in concrete?

If we're even a little bit vulnerable,

then we've got a chance.

Craddock makes the point;  
 it's important WHO was raised from the dead  
 about sunrise this morning:  
 Jesus of Nazareth.

It was that kind of life;  
 that's what was raised.

Not king Herod,  
 who sought after power,  
 leaving death in his wake.

No, it was Jesus  
 who said, "Forgive them Father,  
 they know not what they do."  
 It wasn't emperor in his marble palace,  
 "what does a peasant have to do with me?  
 A peasant out in the wilderness.  
*Jesus, never heard of him...*"

"Who was raised from the dead?  
 Jesus of Nazareth.

Do you know what that means?  
 It means that God lifted up this person and said,  
 "This is the one I've vindicated.  
 This is the one I affirm.  
 This is the one I confirm.  
 This is the one I exonerate.  
 This is the one that tells you  
 this is what I had in mind  
 when I created you in my own image.

Look at him,  
totally without violence.

You could walk among the people of his land and say,  
'Can anybody here raise a hand  
if Jesus ever spoke ill of you?  
Criticized you?  
Put you down?  
Laid hands against you?  
Betrayed you?  
Lied to you?

Can anyone?  
No, no, no."

Do you see how it's important  
that it was Jesus of Nazareth God raised from the dead and said,  
"Now this is what I have in mind for the world?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Craddock, Fred. *The Announcement*. The Collected Sermons of Fred Craddock. p. 18.

But who's in a hurry?

After all, it's Easter.

There's a crowd of people,  
good food to be eat,  
and grandma's house to get to.

Who's in a hurry for new life?

Not the disciples.

They were terrified,

and they ran off back to their old life,

fishing in boats,

holed up in that room on the top floor of the house

and Jesus had to come back all over again,

had to bust through the locked door.

He had to go meet them out on the road,

had to preach to them,

break bread,

bless it,

and then,

eventually,

after all that,

they started telling folks.

I've only got that one thing to say.

This morning,  
sometime before daybreak,  
God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.

That's all the news that there ever needs to be.  
Death,  
crosses,  
betrayal of the worst sort,  
and God can still make new life.

But who's in a hurry?  
Easter isn't over today;  
it starts today.

Fifty days of Easter.  
Fifty days to get our act together  
and tell the world  
that we've got an announcement to make.

And if, after all that time,  
you forget,  
if your good news gets lost in the mail  
or your dog eats your homework,  
well I swear there's some story  
somebody told  
sometime,  
about what happens when things get lost;  
about sheep in the wilderness  
or coins wasted in a dusty corner;  
about how everything,  
every bit...

does get found.