

Christ Church + Washington Parish
The Rev. Cara Spaccarelli
Easter Day; April 20, 2014

There is a box at the top of my sons' closet, where I save all the instruction manuals of my sons' Lego sets. We have instructions on how to make Ninja Turtle cabooses, air craft carriers, . . . With all the legos we have, I'm convinced that my son will one day ask me how to make a double-barreled airplane again and I will be able to produce "the way." Yet after the first successful build - when all the pieces are laid out in clearly marked bags and he has followed step by step the pictures in the manual, after it has been played with and eventually fallen apart and the individual legos have joined their predecessors, my son has never asked me for an instruction book for anything he has made before.

If I was one of the women at the tomb on that Easter morning so long ago, oh how I would have yearned for an instruction book. No one knew what to do with a dead Messiah, so the women were following what they knew to do with any honored person who had died – they waited three days and went to anoint the body. The morning started so simple. They make their way at the break of dawn – these two Marys. Few words exchanged and only the sound of the birds twittering as they made their way along the dirt path to the cemetery on the outskirts of town. The morning chill still in the air skittering across their skin. They get there. They stand in front of the big stone of the tomb, flanked on either side by guards, and the finality of their journey weighs upon them. What stands between them and Jesus, what stands between them and the person who taught them how to live, the time in their life that they felt the most fulfilled, the most who they were called to be – what stands between them and the dreams for their life is a giant boulder that will not be moved.

Then, the earth shakes, the heavens open, a dazzling angel descends, rolls back the boulder that would not be moved and tells them Jesus has been raised. It's hard for us to hear this news outside of our Easter morning lens. A lens that expects the tomb to be empty. A lens that expects the resurrection. But when the women hear that news that morning; they are dumbstruck. The resurrection is something completely new. This is

not how the God they worshipped acted. There is no precedent for this in the holy Scriptures of their faith. The resurrection is not in the instruction manual for the Jewish Messiah.

Operating outside the instruction manual is a typical God thing to do. God does have that creating the world from nothingness in his resume. Perhaps that is why I find the most theologically profound movie of the year to be, not Noah or Son of God, but The Lego Movie. For those who didn't see it, the premise is this: the villain rules over Lego World making sure that everything goes according to the plan. The buildings are constructed in a particular way, according to the instructions, everyone drinks the same over-priced coffee from the same coffee shop, has the same favorite song. The different Lego worlds are separated – the cowboy legos stay in the Wild West World, the boat legos stay in the nautical world, and so on. Lego buildings are not permitted to stray from the all-Important Instructions. People pretty much go with this, because they don't know anything else, except the master builders – the ones who build without instructions, who are inspired to create what hasn't yet been created, to make something from what they have on hand even if it's not the best pieces. The villain's plan is to glue all of lego world together so that the pieces will always stay the way they are supposed to, according to the plan, and the master builders are the only hope to stop the impending freeze.¹

Now it's not hard to associate God the creator with one of these master builders. Yet long after this initial creation, God continues to create without the instruction manual. . . most memorably this day in the resurrection. The resurrection was something completely unexpected. The Jews were not waiting for a Messiah to resurrect after death and show them the way to live. No one at the time was looking for someone to conquer inevitable death. The world was threatened with freezing stagnancy – their

1. Two theological reflections on The Lego Movie helped inspire this sermon:

<http://irreducibleminimums.blogspot.com/2014/02/20-things-i-just-learned-from-lego-movie.html>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/lookingcloser/2014/02/the-lego-movie-2014/>

spirits oppressed by the rulers of the time, the religious people thought accessing God was a matter of following the rules laid out in Scripture. And God comes to people in an unexpected way in Jesus and did an unexpected thing – died and rose again. God, the master builder, acted without an instruction manual and created a new way to experience life – available to all who want to follow.

This new way of living believes in joy amidst fear, hope in the face of despair, grace amidst justice. But there is no instruction manual. We have the principles of good building from Jesus - love your neighbor as yourself, pray, love God, forgive. But they are not a step by step manual, because we are not called to be mindless followers of God, we are called to be co-creators. To use our imaginations, our spirits, our abilities to build this kingdom of God out of what we have in front of us – to be master builders alongside the master builder.

Temptation abounds amidst this. There are plenty of instruction manuals floating around offering us another way to live. How to be the most important member of the team at work and be home in time for dinner, how to move effortlessly between social circles and have lots of friends, how to live a balanced life, how to raise smart and successful children, how to be in control of your life. We are called to resist holding tight to these instruction manuals and build with God inspired by love, grace, mercy, hope, justice, and truth. Sometimes it's harder than other times. When all the pieces of our life are dumped together and we don't have a clear sense of what we are building, it can be hard to know where to start. Or conversely we have a clear sense of what we are building in our lives and can't find the right piece because it's buried somewhere and we have to change the plan, sometimes just tweaking it, and sometimes it launches us into a whole new direction. Building the kingdom sometimes means letting something be destroyed, so that it can be built anew – letting something die, so something else can rise. There are no step by step instructions to cling to in building the kingdom. Which is good news because we will never find ourselves blocked by a boulder that cannot be moved in becoming who God is calling us to be.

The women at the Easter tomb were filled with fear and joy, the gospel says. They had seen something they never expected; something outside their framework of belief, and they were never the same again. Never again could they be without hope. Never again could they put limitations on their God. Never again would they be blocked by a boulder of the world's making. They became builders of the kingdom of God along a path they never could have predicted. May we discover that same amazement on this Easter morning, let go of whatever imagined instruction book we are holding onto, walk forth by faith as we become builders of the kingdom.