

'Amateur Hour'

He had no income, student loans out his ears, and plans to get married. So the prospect of having a bachelor party lent itself to a rather mischievous kind of creativity. Luckily for Adam, some of the country's premier rock-climbing was within a two hours' drive. So after rallying some likeminded friends, three weeks later a motley crew of 14 craft-brew millennials set out for 'The Gunks'.

You've seen 'The Gunks' before, or at least something like them, in movies and tv shows. Think of an old Western film, where a lone cowboy glides astride into a steep buttercream rock canyon. That's what they look like.

And as this band of mostly bearded men set up camp the first night, thinking through what they hoped would lay ahead, a sober truth wafted over them in the campfire smoke. None of them knew how to free climb a rock face. This was a squad of idealists, sprinkled with a tender pinch of experience. They had no climbing gear, only gusto and prayers for crisp spring skies.

Nevertheless, a tentative plan was duck taped together the next morning, after a cursory glance over an official state park map and bold coffee. The idea was to scale up a series of rock faces with no support at all, capped by a cliff top scenic lunch.

So they took to the razor edged craggily trail, that slithered through dense pine and birch and beech, to recede like a hairline before a massive jutting stern of white stone. To them, this was gonna be awesome. To anyone else watching, it was a disaster waiting to happen.

Like Adam, many of us have felt the push and pull of our commitments and responsibilities, that shrink the idea of enjoying Easter to just a possibility.

When you've got babies and dance routines, job hunts and blood sugar levels, feeding and plowing, Easter can feel like an experience enjoyed only by professionals. The fullness of life often times competes with and conquers our hopes for faith. At least that's how it looks from the ground up.

Adam and his compadres made it to the cliff top unscathed. And as they surveyed the real-life Thomas Kinkade painting that lay before them, chewing on victorious PB&J's with legs dangling gleefully over the edge, it hit them. "Do you realize what just happened? That was insane! How did none of us die on the way up here?" Even amateurs can do the incredible. In fact, that's most often what happens.

When Jesus was conceived miraculously in Mary's womb, without any human aid, that was a first. When He healed the sick, the paralyzed, the blind with a touch and prayer, that was a first. When Jesus rose from the dead and lifted all of creation out of the pit of sin into new life, that was a first. Easter wasn't practiced or performed by professionals. It was a first for God. And that gives hope to all of us amateurs.

Easter is for people who don't always look right, act right, know what to say or when to say it. It's for people who don't know much about the Bible and don't do church that often or well. The truth is, to Jesus, we're all amateurs. And so was He.

So know that you don't have to be a religious professional to experience the mountainous wonder and joy of Easter. Easter is the greatest gift of all, eternal life with God, that is designed to be enjoyed on this side of heaven.