**April 21, 2019 John 20:1-18**

***Community of Resurrection***

**Scripture:** John 20:1-18 NRSV

(1)Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. (2)So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." (3)Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. (4)The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. (5)He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. (6)Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, (7)and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. (8)Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; (9)for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. (10)Then the disciples returned to their homes. (11)But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; (12)and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. (13)They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." (14)When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. (15)Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." (16)Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). (17)Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (18)Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

**Notes:**

1. ***Mary*** felt it all
   1. He was the ***Messiah***, the one who would free them
   2. Her ***grief*** was so great that she was going to the tomb when it was dangerous for followers of Jesus.
   3. Mary was going to ***show*** ***up***, no matter what that meant for her.
2. Mary is ***there*** that Sunday morning.
   1. Jesus shows up, but she doesn’t ***recognize*** him.
   2. Mary recognizes Jesus when he ***speaks*** her name.
   3. ***Resurrection*** is something to be shared.
3. The way to resurrection is through ***death***.
   1. There is resurrection for the dead places of our ***hearts*** and of our ***world***.
   2. Our ***baptism*** reminds us that we are a part of the resurrection community.
4. We are the ***community*** of the resurrection.
   1. Those who call Jesus Lord and Savior are ***disciples*** of Christ.
   2. He is inviting us to be ***apostles***.
   3. Remember and celebrate that Christ is ***risen***.

**Transcript:**

We have all experienced Death. The first person in my life that I actually remember losing in death, was my friend Kevin. If I am not mistaken we were 5 years old. And he was riding in a car that crashed, and he died that day. I had many questions, but got few answers. I ran into his parents many times as an adult Sometimes I thought that every time I would run into his parents, I would remind them of him and their loss, bringing back their hurt. I also remember losing relatives the first being great grandpap Mock. I remember visiting him and Great Grandma one week and the next he was gone. I was very young and didn’t comprehend the extent of what was happening at the time.

Through the years I experienced many more deaths in my circle of friends and family. In some events I mourned very hard, crying and sobbing, as I tried to come to grips with my loss, empathizing with the other family members who were much closer, feeling their pain as well. As I continue to get older, I realize that myself, as well as, more of my friends and family are drawing closer to their entrance into eternity.

We all are drawing closer to that time; closer to the day when Jesus calls us home; closer to the day that has been set aside for our passing; closer to the day when we meet Jesus. And as we do our perspective on death and dying changes.

Some of us fight that day tooth and nail, striving to live as healthy as we can; defying death and aches and pains that take us there. Others come to grips with the reality that none of us get out of this world alive. Focusing on where we will spend eternity, and doing what we can to receive the promise of eternity in heaven with Jesus. Living our lives to the fullest, with as few regrets as possible.

Death has been explained many different ways, and all of them seem to leave me wanting. It feels disordered and wrong. I’ve heard of grief being described as waves, as if the grief of a loss will overwhelm one moment but feel nearly absent in the next. Grief is an inexplicable pain, and death is a loss beyond all other losses. Today we look at the grief Jesus followers experienced and the joy that follows. Turn with me to John 20:1-18 as we share in our Gospel passage today:

*(1)Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. (2)So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." (3)Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. (4)The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. (5)He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. (6)Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, (7)and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. (8)Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; (9)for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. (10)Then the disciples returned to their homes. (11)But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; (12)and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. (13)They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." (14)When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. (15)Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." (16)Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). (17)Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (18)Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.*  (John 20:1-18 NRSV)

Mary felt it all, especially when it came to the grief of Jesus dying; The loss of a friend, a teacher, and a guide. The grief that would come to any of us at the loss of a friend, yet compounded by what seemed to be the loss of hope as well. She thought he was the Messiah, the one who would rise up to free them from their oppressors, from poverty, from hardship.

She thought he might save her too a powerful hope for a woman in a world that looked down on women, a world that years and cultures later would often still seek to discredit her. Her grief was so great that she traveled to the tomb alone, John says. And while other Gospel accounts say there were others with her, they are always still just women. She was going to the tomb at a time that would have been dangerous for the followers of Jesus.

But Mary still went. Maybe she thought they would discredit her due to her gender, or maybe her grief compelled her, or maybe this illustrates how bold and brave she is, that she was going to show up, no matter what that meant for her. Mary is there that Sunday morning. She has tears in her eyes, grief in her heart—when she witnesses the miracle of all miracles.

**Jesus shows up, but she doesn’t recognize him.** Mary believes him to be a gardener. John is illustrating a theological truth here that what first happened in a garden (sin entering the world) was being conquered in a garden, through resurrection. Jesus is a gardener of sorts, causing life to grow where there was once death. It makes sense that she doesn’t recognize him why would she expect to see someone alive whom she has just seen die? She’s in a garden, so it would make sense for her to believe him to be a gardener.

While there is theological truth and depth to John writing about gardens and gardeners, Mary wouldn’t have been making those deep theological connections. She would just know that her friend had died and that she missed him. She would have been sitting in deep grief, not just at the loss of a friend but also at the loss of the hope of him being the one to free her and her people. She is crying out of deep pain,and as anyone with deep pain knows, it is hard to focus on anything but the pain of that moment.

There have been studies done on the effect of grief on people, and brains shut down to their very basic functions when faced with such extreme emotions. Unnecessary tasks are nearly impossible to do, and it is easy to forget simple things due to the impact of grief on the brain. This impact on brain function also accounts for her inability to recognize Jesus because she is operating in survival mode. Her one source of hope comes from her ability to honor his body for his burial, and her grief would be compounded by losing that ability. She doesn’t care about anything in this moment except knowing where Jesus’ body is.

**Mary recognizes Jesus when he speaks her name.** When her name is spoken there is a powerful moment of recognition. Being named by Jesus has power. Jesus sees her, knows her, and calls out to her. She is not just another person grieving; she is his disciple whom he loves. It is out of her naming and recognition of Jesus that she is told to go. She is now given the name of evangelist as Jesus tells her to tell the others. She is given a task that wouldn’t have been given to women because their testimony lacked credibility. She is no longer just Mary; now she is Mary who has seen the risen Christ, Mary the evangelist.

**Jesus sending Mary communicates to us that resurrection is something to be shared.** We are called to be a resurrection community. We, like Mary and the disciples, are called out of sin and death. We live in hopeful expectation that, just as Christ was raised, we too will be raised. With that hope, and in that hope, we go like Mary to share the news of the risen Christ and the hope of resurrection life with the world. We find the dead places of the world and are called to breathe resurrection into them. We join the Holy Spirit in the work of sowing seeds of resurrection. We walk boldly, despite the dangers that might exist, to share with those who haven’t heard yet. We illuminate dark places with light. We find those who are locked in rooms in fear, like the disciples, and we share with them the news that they do not need to live in fear.

**The way to resurrection is through death.** Living the resurrected life means walking the hard road to the cross. This means laying down our greed, selfishness, pride, etc. This also might mean laying down our very lives for those around us. It means doing hard things and going to unexpected and hard places. We go into the worst places of the world trusting the hope of resurrection. The resurrection community does not fear the worst places but seeks to bring hope into them. The resurrection community finds the darkest and most dangerous places of the world so they may cast the light and life of resurrection into them. The resurrection community knows that in the power of the Spirit, they can do hard things.

**There is resurrection for the dead places of our hearts and of our worlds.** There is resurrection in all circumstances; for places embroiled in racism, sexism, and any form of hate, there is resurrection; for places consumed by poverty and hopelessness, there is hope in the resurrection; for places battling drought and disease, there is resurrection hope; for places overcome by violence, there is resurrection.

As the resurrection community, we are the ones who are called to go. Even when it is hard and difficult. The gifts of the body multiply our work. We are not abandoned but are gifted by the Holy Spirit. We declare through our lives, our words, and our actions that even the most forgotten places, even the worst places, can be redeemed.

**Our baptism reminds us that we are a part of the resurrection community.** As we proclaim in the act of baptism, as we are immersed in the water, as our head goes under, we are dying to our self. We then immerge from the water, as we did from the womb, emerging a creature that has been born again, not of the flesh, but of the spirit.

Baptism is the initiating act into the community of resurrection. The water illustrates cleansing but also being brought out of death and into life. Have you been baptized? Have you demonstrated your faith in the act of baptism? Have you experienced the sacrament and shared it with the world? Have you demonstrated the outward sign of inward grace? If you have never been baptized, we need to remedy this, see me so we can schedule a service to do this. When we baptize others, we are welcoming them into this community to be people of the resurrection, but we also remember who we are, that we are people of the resurrection and a part of this community

We are the community of the resurrection. Knowing Jesus was alive was not enough for Mary. She was sent to share the good news with the other disciples. But she was also sent to share the good news with the world, just as the church is sent today. When she met Jesus, face to face in the garden; He first helped her to realize that he was who he said he was. He then told her to go to the other disciples and share with them what she has seen. She was asked to be His witness, to others. She is the first commissioned by a risen Jesus to share the good news of his resurrection. And while she is never recognized as an apostle, which is what an apostle does. An apostle is commissioned and goes to share the good news of Jesus Christ. An apostle is one who is a vigorous advocate or supporter of an idea or cause. An apostle is one who not only is a disciple, one who follows a teaching; but also shares it with others in a way that brings them to belief.

Each of us here this morning who call Jesus Lord and Savior, are Disciples of Christ. If you have asked Jesus into your heart and follow after his teachings you are a disciple. But you are also invited to be an apostle of Christ as well. When Jesus shares his instructions about going and being his witnesses, He is inviting us to be an apostle. Are you an apostle of Jesus Christ? Do you believe so firmly in what Jesus said and did, that you want others to also believe? This is the calling of every disciple of Christ; to be an apostle, to share the story of Christ to the world, to share the teachings of Christ to the world, to be His witness to the world. Do you believe, are you fulfilling your call?

We remember and celebrate that Christ is risen this morning, but it is not enough for us to celebrate here in this space. We, like Mary, are told to go and tell the others. We are called to breathe resurrection, to live resurrection, to sing resurrection. To do the work of resurrection in the world, so that the dead places might come to life and that we might see others join in this community of hope, join in this community of the resurrection.