

**Sermon for Easter Sunday  
Year C**

**[RCL] Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...things happen early in the morning. Mornings are mystical and sacred, the earth rises from its slumber to greet the coming day, but this morning did not feel mystical, this morning did not feel sacred. Mary Magdalene did not want to get out of bed but the orange glow in the east was spreading across the sky. The day's doings were calling.

Sitting on her bed Mary said the customary prayer; "Blessed are you Lord God, Ruler of the Universe. I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great." (Modeh Ani, traditional Jewish first prayer of the day.) But the words didn't offer the usual comfort. This morning the words were just words.

The last few days seemed a blur. The Passover meal, with its prayers and rituals, family and friends gathered to recite the ancient story, seemed so long ago. Jesus' strange words that night as he passed the bread, "Do this in remembrance of me", now made eerie sense. She didn't really think it would happen. But he was gone. They had come for him. Right there in the garden. The garden where they often went to pray, to talk with Jesus. The garden that held so many happy memories, so many stories. Then he was gone.

She had followed the next day, in disbelief with the other women, as he made the slow agonizing walk to his death. Mary had stood there numb and in shock as they drove the nails, as he breathed his last. She had comforted his mother. The words didn't come. The words couldn't come. All she could do was hold on to his mother. She followed to the garden as they laid him in the tomb. He was dead. It was finished.

But the burial rites needed to be done. Sabbath meant they couldn't do the customary anointing. But today, early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, she had a job to do. Mary dressed as if in a dream. This was not happening. She made her way down the street to the waiting women. With a silent nod they joined in slow procession to the garden, to the tomb. How were they going to move the stone?

The stone had been rolled away! It was empty! How could this be? What have they done? They have taken him. One final insult from the people who had robbed her of her friend, her teacher, her Rabbouni. They must have taken his body to deny him the proper burial. The stone was rolled away.

With tears trailing after her, Mary ran to Simon Peter. "They have taken him!" is all she could get out. Then the flood of tears came. They have taken him. Looking into the empty tomb with the stone rolled away someone was sitting there. "Why are you weeping?" "Don't you understand? They have taken him!" A voice from behind her: "Woman! Why are you weeping?"

Who are you looking for?” That voice. It sounded familiar, but it couldn’t be. “They have taken him! Do you know where?”

“Mary!”

“Rabbouni?!”

That voice. The familiar voice of the impossible. How can this be? This is not possible. “Destroy this temple and in three days it will be rebuilt,” echoed in her head. He’s alive! Jesus is risen! “Go Mary. Tell the others.” New tears as she ran to tell the good news. “I have seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!”

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, things happen.

Early on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene expected to find death but instead she found new life. We have stood in Mary Magdalene’s shoes. We know only too well what it means to expect death but find new life. We know what it feels like to follow on Good Friday only to be confronted with Easter Sunday. We have stood there peering into the empty tomb with the stone rolled away experiencing the impossible. The thing is, we don’t go looking for resurrection – resurrection finds us.

Jesus’ resurrection is about God loving us so much that God is willing to go to any length to find us in all the wrong places. Because like Mary, we go looking for God in the familiar, in the places we expect to find God. But in Jesus’ resurrection God finds us when we are down and out, when we are at the end of our rope, when all hope seems lost. God rolls back the stones that bind and confine us. God stands waiting with a familiar voice to call us to new life. Call us to “Go and tell.”

Resurrection has no meaning, no purpose, no place unless like Mary Magdalene we go and tell it! Resurrection has no meaning if we cannot share the Good News of Easter to a world living in Good Friday! Resurrection has no meaning unless we are willing to live as Easter people.

Go and tell of your life transformed by the one who healed the sick and cured the lame.  
Go and tell of the one who blessed the broken and welcomed the outcast.  
Go and tell that “Do this in remembrance of me” is real.  
Go and tell that God has work for us to do in our neighborhoods and street corners.  
Go and tell that God was there, God is here and God will be there!  
Go and tell that God find us and loves us into redemption through Christ Jesus our Lord.

In truth resurrection isn’t an event it is an experience. We are called to go and tell not only with our lips but also with our lives. Go and tell of the resurrection power of God’s love and hope.

Wendell Berry in his poem “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” puts it like this:

*So, friends, every day do something  
that won’t compute. Love the Lord.*

*Love the world. Work for nothing.  
Take all that you have and be poor.  
Love someone who does not deserve it.  
Give your approval to all you cannot  
understand. Praise ignorance.  
Ask the questions that have no answers.  
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.  
Say that your main crop is the forest  
that you did not plant,  
that you will not live to harvest.  
Say that the leaves are harvested  
when they have rotted into the mold.  
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.  
Put your faith in the two inches of humus  
that will build under the trees  
every thousand years.  
Listen to carrion – put your ear  
close, and hear the faint chattering  
of the songs that are to come.  
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.  
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful  
though you have considered all the facts.  
Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary,  
some in the wrong direction.  
Practice resurrection.*

We need to practice being witnesses to resurrection in a world clinging to Good Friday!

This Easter, may you open your whole self — heart, soul, mind, and strength — to God's inspiring call to new life and renewed love. May you feel God luring you, prompting you, goading you, cajoling you, calling you and encouraging you — each day and in each new present moment — to practice resurrection. "We have seen the Lord!" Alleluia! Amen.

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