

“Resurrection!?”
Isaiah 65:17-25; Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18

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So often as I come to an Easter Day I expect to come in with an incredible joy. But I look at Mary, and as she came to the tomb and found it empty, her expectations dashed, she turns away from that open tomb, particularly the second time she is there, and she weeps.

I don't often think about going into Easter weeping, and yet I see Mary weeping, not sure of what's happening. What was she weeping about? Jesus wasn't there. The body wasn't there. Maybe she was weeping because it wasn't there, but maybe she was still weeping in grief as well. Maybe she was weeping about the things she hadn't said, about the hopes she had had for Jesus, about what she thought was going to be that wasn't.

You know, I don't think she was all that different from us as we come and encounter life and struggle with the unexpected, with the ways things don't always go the way we want them to, the grief we bear, the struggles with life, the way we don't see God doing things quite the way we thought God would or should do them. Mary reminds me of how we, too, can weep in the face of a life that sometimes brings incredible grief and struggle.

It is incredible in this moment as Mary stands there weeping and looks in again and sees these angels, they ask, “Why are you weeping?” We've talked a little bit about why she may have been weeping. Why would they ask that question? Because there's something else going on. How many times in our own lives have we been in the midst of doing something and kind of turned a corner and found something new, something unexpected. You see, as Mary is grieving and weeping, she is for us a very human figure, a figure that in many ways represents us, and at the same moment something incredible is happening. God is at work!

There's a line in one of C. S. Lewis' books in which things are beginning to change, and he says, “Aslan is on the move!” God is at work. Mary is in the midst of a very human moment crying, and God is in the midst of doing something with cosmic significance. It's incredible! Who is this God that has come and left an empty tomb?

It's hard to remember I think in the midst of our lives. I wake up each morning and I don't wonder that I can look out the window and see creation, and yet it's there because God has given it to us, because God has created, because of the wonder of who God is. In the beginning God created, and not only did he create in the beginning, it's still here. It's sustained. God's with us. It's too easy to stand there weeping and not see the possibilities of the moment. It's too easy to see all the struggles in the moment and forget what God had done, is doing, and will do in the future.

This incredible God who created everything that is can keep it going and make for possibility. It all comes together, I think, on Easter morning with Mary weeping. It's fantastic! When we begin to talk about God, how can we really describe God, because God is really beyond our imaginations. God is huge. God creates all that is. The technical word for it is transcendent. God is other. God is beyond us, and yet this story of Jesus is God entering in to our daily lives, moment by moment.

There's this wonderful moment on Maundy Thursday that talked about it. The foot washing. Jesus is given all in his hands. He has the power, it says, and what does he do? He puts on a towel, gets on his knees, and washes the disciples' feet. There is this incredible way that the most powerful, the most other, the most fantastic thing in the universe comes in and invites us into that moment of service—a service that doesn't stop on that Thursday night, but goes all the way to the cross and beyond. He enters into our world, our lives.

So as this cosmic event is happening, as Jesus is resurrected, how does he do that first introduction? Oftentimes we want to have the horns blaring and all that, and it's worth it. It's incredible. But what happens here? A simple question: Mary, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for? It's almost as if the gardener is there talking to Mary, and Mary is so focused on her own expectations she can't see who it is. Boy that feels like my life—so focused on my own expectations, my own struggles, my own thoughts, my own worries I can't even see who's there. And Jesus asks a couple of simple questions just to begin to enter into that relationship with her in that moment. And what I see is a pivotal moment when Jesus says, "Mary." When he calls her name. It's a moment we know Jesus knows her.

Throughout the Gospel, we know that Jesus knows the people he talks to. He goes to a little guy up in a tree and invites him to come down. He goes to a woman at a well and starts talking to her and telling her her life story. It's like saying Jesus knows their name. And just like I think Mary represents us, and Jesus knows her name, Jesus knows our names. In the middle of this incredible, fantastic beyond expectation kind of thing, Jesus simply knows her name, says her name, invites her to recognize him.

That's Easter. We are invited to recognize a living Lord who knows our name, whose love and grace makes all the difference in the world. The world can't put him away, shut him away in a tomb, but he comes again to us and knows our name. His love is real; his work is among us. He knows our name.

Mary recognizes him and the wonder begins, and she runs off to tell the others. She's one of those first witnesses to the resurrection. Sometimes we say someone who dies is a witness to the resurrection. We don't have to wait until we die to be a witness to the resurrection. Mary is a witness to the resurrection—a witness to how God's forgiveness, God's love, gives her hope—gives us hope.

I read recently that many ancient peoples didn't have a word for "blue" and so researchers wondered about it and wondered why. They found a tribe that hadn't been

impacted by the world yet, and found that in their language they didn't have a word for "blue." So they could show them a color scheme with green squares and one blue one, and they had a hard time picking out the blue. If they were shown one with a slight variation in green, they could see it.

Sometimes when we don't have a word for something, it's hard to see it. I think God has given us a word through Jesus, in Jesus, that describes the hope, the forgiveness, the grace, the possibility of new life, the wonder of new life. That word is "resurrection." We have that now in our vocabulary. We can see new life.

Resurrection is God at work changing us, changing the world, transforming us. He does it through a grace that encounters us and simply calls our name and invites us to recognize his grace is alive, and that if we follow him we get to come again and remember the joy of resurrection, the joy of Easter, the joy of being loved, the joy of loving one another, the joy that Christ has brought us.

He knows our names and invites us to be witnesses to the resurrection. He is risen. He is risen indeed.