

Easter Sunday
4.16.17

John 20.1-18

20 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. **2** She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. **4** They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. **6** Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, **7** while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. **8** Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— **9** for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. **10** Then they went home.

11 Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. **12** She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. **13** "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

14 She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. **15** "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

16 "Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

17 "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

Raised To New Life!
4.16.17

Today is Easter Sunday. the Day of Resurrection. It is a grand and glorious celebration of New Life. It is the Hope of Eternal Life. It is the reason we are here today, and every Sunday.

Before the Resurrection, there was a Crucifixion, and before that, a betrayal and an arrest, and before that, there was a lot of evil, oppression, and injustice.

Last week, we celebrated Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But then, the mood shifted. the praises and adoration turned to plots and accusations.

IWW do we respond when faced with some injustice?

In our Gospel reading this morning, we hear the Gospel writer, John's familiar account of the Resurrection. After a torturous week, in which Jesus' closest companions completely abandon Him, the Religious leaders arrest, try, ridicule and sentence Him, AND the Roman government officials execute Him as a common criminal, Jesus ends up on a cross between two criminals. His friends and followers watch the terror unfold, but from a distance. When at last, Jesus is dead, the mourners gather around Him, to give Him a proper burial. They once again, keep watch, only in fear for their own safety. The guards seal the tomb, to be sure no one took His body away. But then, Sunday morning, a miracle happened. Sunday morning, His body was gone. Sunday morning, He was raised from the Dead. New life occurred! What looked like a dark and dismal day, was transformed into New Life. It was the Promise of greater things to come. The Tomb is Empty, We have hope of New Life.

He is Risen! He has been raised to New Life!

God, Who is Creator of the World, came into this world as a Human. He lived as one of us. He struggled as one of us. He was tempted, in every way, yet He remained sinless and perfect. When the tide of public opinion turned against Him, He was arrested, tried and condemned to die. As a human, He did not want to die this slow, agonizing death. He prayed to the Father to *"take this cup from Me."* As Son of God, He knew that was His purpose and mission. God loved the world so much that He came as a Human to save the world from our sin. Humanity, sinful as it is, was condemned to die. But Jesus was the Perfect Sacrifice. He died so we could live new lives.

He is Risen! He has been raised to New Life!

Reflections from a Retired UM Pastor -

What can we learn from these days that we call "Holy Week"?

"A truth we can draw from the events of that last week is that public opinion should never be trusted. When He entered the Holy City, adoring masses greeted Him with adulation and praise. Just a few days later, another mob cried out for His death.

One reason our Savior met with such opposition lay in the arena of expectations. The Hebrews wanted Him to save them from Roman rule, to become a warrior king who would employ military power to free them from oppression. But He knew who He was and why He had come, not to usher in a golden age of throne-sitting, but to display the sacrificial love of God to rescue the entire human race from our worst selves.

Of course, a final (truth) that can lead us forward is that the death and resurrection of this one Man can give us eternal hope. According to those who later wrote about Him, we can die to our old way of living and rise again to see not a new face in the mirror but an entirely new version of ourselves." (Dr. Russ Clark, retired UM Pastor, former DS - Reflections on Holy Week - used by permission)

He is Risen! He has been raised to New Life!

And, as baptized believers, we die to ourselves and our sin. And we are raised to new life.

But sometimes, in the rising to new life, we face challenges, resistance and struggles. Sometimes we may not want to fully rise to the new life God has in store for us. Sometimes we may want the reward without the journey.

In order to experience new life, we must die to ourselves and our sin.

Isn't that how the Apostle Paul talks about resurrection?... dying to sin, and rising to new life. Romans 6:3-11

Have you forgotten that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were... sharing in his death? We were dead and buried with him in baptism, so that just as he was raised from the dead ... so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether. If we have... shared his death, let us rise and live our new lives with him! Let us never forget that our old selves died with him on the cross (so) that the tyranny of sin over us might be broken... And if we were dead ... with him we can believe that we shall also be (made) ... alive with him. ...look upon yourselves as dead to the ... power of sin but alive ... to the call of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:3-11 J.B. Phillips New Testament)

IWW are you dying to your sin and being raised to New Life?

IWW are you living a life marked by God's love, grace and forgiveness?

Friends, we are living in a dark and scary time. Fear, despair, injustice and death seem to abound. We hear a lot of voices that tell us that there is little hope.

But hear the Good News!

God loves us so much that He sent His One and Only Son to die for our sins, so that all who believe, all who receive Him as Savior and Lord, will live eternally. God did not send Jesus to condemn but to save. As we put our trust in Jesus, as we die to ourselves and our sin, we are raised to New Life.

New possibilities. New ministries. New relationships.

How are you dying to your sin and being raised to New Life?

IWW are you living a life marked by God's love, grace and forgiveness?

As committed followers of Jesus Christ, we have HOPE of New Life. No matter what we have ever done or said or thought, He lived and died for us! He is Risen! And because He lives, we have Hope of being Raised to New Life! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!

Amen!