

Sermon
Easter Sunday
April 9th, 2023
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa
The Reverend Victoria Scott
Readings: ACTS 10:34-43; PSALM 118:1-2, 14-24; COLOSSIANS 3:1-4;
JOHN 20:1-8

Easter Sunday. For Christians, the most joyful day of the year. But it doesn't start out with unbridled joy, does it?

It starts out with Mary coming to the tomb. Her heart heavy with grief. It starts out with confusion. With anxiety. Why is the stone rolled away? Where is the body?

It starts out with Mary running, running from this confusion, running from this bad news of stone rolled away and empty tomb. Then there is more running as Peter and the other disciples run toward that confusion, toward that news. They go in, but not too far. They see the linen wrappings. They believe what Mary ran to tell them: that the Lord has been taken from the tomb, but they don't yet understand what this means. They don't yet understand that he has been raised from the dead. Then, Peter and the other disciples go home.

Mary doesn't, though. She bends down, weeping, and peers into that cave, into that dank darkness. In that darkness she sees two angels, and then out of that darkness she sees Jesus, but doesn't recognize him until he speaks her name. Then, **she sees**. She is able to say "I have seen the Lord".

There is an invitation in this, for us, this morning. It's an invitation to peer into that cave with Mary. To peer into the darkness, to let our eyes adjust, our pupils dilate, open. To trust that we can – will – see in the darkness. To trust what we will see: the Risen Christ.

In "The Universal Christ", Richard Rohr writes that "Resurrection" is another word for change, but particularly positive change—which we tend to see only in the long run. In the short run, it often just looks like death. It often looks like the darkness, but in that darkness is light. A light that cannot be extinguished. A light that darkness cannot overcome." The Risen Christ.

Richard Rohr also refers to 20th century mystic Caryll Houselander's description of a transformative experience on a train. She wrote this:

I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-hanging—workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but

as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all. But I saw more than that; not only was Christ in every one of them, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them—but because He was in them, and because they were here, the whole world was here too, here in this underground train; not only the world as it was at that moment, not only all the people in all the countries of the world, but all those people who had lived in the past, and all those yet to come.”

This is what happened in and through the cross. God, through Jesus's outstretched arms, enfolded all people, all of creation into a powerful, loving embrace. An embrace that holds all our living, all our dying. All our rejoicing and all our sorrow. It was an embrace that infused the world with the power of love. We are invited to see that – to let our eyes adjust to that today, and every day... God is calling us to adjust our view, our vision, our lens so that we see Christ in everything.

That loving embrace is stronger than the power of death. Stronger than the powers of domination and control and oppression and violence. That embrace raised Jesus from the darkness of the tomb, and in doing that, it infused the world with the Risen Christ. All people, all things, all of

creation. And we are invited to see Resurrection, to see the Risen Christ, everywhere.

It takes some adjusting, though, doesn't it! The darkness of that cave. The darkness of the injustices of our world. The darkness of power based on control of resources, on scarcity, on domination, on oppression and injustice. The dark shadows in the lives of the marginalized and the vulnerable. There are shadows everywhere that dim the light of Christ in people, in creation...

When we're in the dark, our pupils dilate, they expand. We sit in that darkness until that expanding – opening – happens. We see in a new way, a way that we didn't think was possible. This is what the Resurrection calls us to!

The stone was rolled away, so that Mary could peer into that darkness. When I was here with you in 2015, Gary and Linda introduced me to a song by the band "Mumford and Sons", called "Roll Away Your Stone", and the first lines are: "Roll away your stone I will roll away mine. Together we can see what we will find. Don't leave me alone at this time. For I am afraid of what I will discover inside."

This speaks to those feelings of vulnerability that are part of peering into the darkness. We don't need to be afraid of finding the power of God's love, of seeing Christ in Every Thing and every one, but as we peer into the darkness, as we wait for our eyes to adjust to the Risen Christ, we might find things in ourselves that leave us feeling vulnerable.

Together we can see what we'll find..." The Resurrection invites us to see that we have this – this togetherness – in this community of Ascension. We have this in the waters of our baptism. We have this whenever we sing and pray together, whenever we're in community. We have this as we share in the Eucharist. We have this when we let our eyes adjust to the Risen Christ, everywhere.

Sam Wells writes that each of the Gospels "...seem to assume that Jesus' death and resurrection are the hinge of history, that nothing that was true before can ever be assumed to be the same again, and that nothing that was considered impossible before need necessarily be assumed to be impossible after. In short, all bets are off."

All bets are off. Nothing is impossible with God. Nothing is impossible with the power of love. This is what we're invited to see this

morning. This is what we re invited to let our eyes adjust to as we look at each other, as we look at our world.

Christ is Risen, He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.