

# Sermon: Easter

The Rev. Mike Wernick

April 1, 2018

Year B

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18

This morning's message is simple... Christ is Risen... it is Mystery... I can't explain it... I don't know just how God did it... I can't understand what the quantum mechanical process was... I'm not privy... I just can't... but in rising from the dead... in every way... and any way... that Jesus rose from the dead... he ensured the death of death...

Death... which for thousands of years... people have tried to put off... to escape... to outsmart... or just to deny... now has no power upon us...

And this is foreshadowed in scripture... Daniel 12:2-3 says that... *many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake... and the knowledgeable will be radiant... like the bright expanse of sky... and those who lead the many to righteousness... will be like the stars forever and ever...*

Professor Wil Gafney writes... in the story from 2 Maccabees... about the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons... the sons affirm their belief in being raised to everlasting life... and Psalm 30:3 affirms... O Lord... you brought up my soul from Sheol... restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit... and so what is constant in the scriptures... is God's power over death...

It seems telling to me somehow... that the two angels revealed themselves... not to Simon Peter... and not to the beloved disciple... but to a woman... to one woman... the Gospel writer had about sixty years to change that detail... but it must have been too important to change...

And as I read the Gospel for today... something new stood out for me... when Mary asked the two angels where they had laid Jesus... she turned around and saw him... but she did not recognize him... she did not re-cognize him... she supposed him to be the gardener... he was the same... but he was also different... and the difference is that he'd been resurrected... and that difference made him the first of a new kind of man... in a garden... a new type of *adam*... and after Jesus called her by name... after she made the connection between who he is now... and who he was then... after that... she turned again... the Greek word means turn quite around or reverse... literally or figuratively... but it also means convert...

And I think we can understand Mary's turning... have you ever been somewhere... and someone you've already met is there... but you either can't remember their name... or you may have totally forgotten that you'd even met them... and then when you make the connection... when they realize that you've forgotten them while they've not forgotten you... and maybe you're embarrassed... and you either turn away physically... or maybe just on the inside... and then you come back to yourself... like Mary did... when she said... *Rabbouni*... and the relationship pours back into you... and you remember the way you met... or the connections you've made... the stories you shared... and your heart is filled to overflowing... and you reach out to grab ahold of all of it... and Jesus says... *not yet... I want to give all of my Self to you... I want to give you resurrected life too... but some things must happen first... I must go... so I can send the Advocate... so do not spoil the fullness of what is to come... by holding on... to what was...*

Perhaps the angels did not reveal themselves to the two men... perhaps Jesus revealed himself... as a new creation... first to woman... because she was receptive... women know that the place from which new life comes is mysterious... women know that when new life takes hold within them... that they are changed... women know that new life must be protected... and in speaking to her... Jesus breathed on her... the first woman... Mary the first person on whom the resurrected Jesus breathed...

Remember from last evening... *Mortal... can these bones live...* God breathed the breath of life into the *adam...* the earth creature... and from him... he took a rib... and made woman... Eve... the text doesn't say that God breathed into her... but here... Jesus' breath falls on Mary... and the name Eve... comes from the Latin name Eva... which comes from the Hebrew word *Chavah...* meaning to breathe... and *Chayah...* meaning to live or to give life...

*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...* this description is so much like that of the Ark of the Covenant... the two Cherubim... kneeling down at either end... facing each other... with their wings extended... and touching... creating within their four wings... a throne of sorts from which God could rise... the place where Jesus lay... the place from which he rose... is like the Ark... from which God went to be with God's people in Babylon... and Jesus rose to new life... so God could be with all of God's people... And this morning's reading from Isaiah... affirms this truth... *on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples... a feast... and he will destroy the shroud that is cast over all peoples... the sheet that is spread over all nations... he will swallow up death forever...*

Have you ever been invited to a party... and thought... I'm not good enough to go... I'm not worthy... I'm not that kind of person... I don't have the right clothes... I won't know what to say... the thing is... when we're invited... from the heart... the hostess or host really wants us to be there... truly wants us to be there because of who we are... and we're the only ones who manufacture reasons not to go...

Mary didn't recognize Jesus... it's not that Jesus was unrecognizable... but something in her... if only for a brief moment... kept her from seeing with her heart... kept her from accepting the invitation to the feast... *a feast of rich food... of well-aged wines strained clear...* maybe it was her false sense of unworthiness... I mean... let's face it... most

women then were certainly considered unworthy... but Mary went... and brought a message of new life...

*I have seen the Lord...* and Jesus invites us... Jesus truly wants us at the banquet... Jesus wants us to re-cognize him... whether he's standing right in front of us... or whether he's being made know to us... in others...

Happy Easter !!

Mike+