

# Sermon: Easter

The Rev. Mike Wernick

April 5, 2015

Year B

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

John 20:1-18

My mother used to sew... she never had a very fancy sewing machine... like one of those you connect to your computer... but it was... as they say... serviceable... she'd start with a pattern... and cut it out... and pin it to some fabric that she'd also cut out... and sew it all together... put on some buttons and maybe a zipper... and although she never made an Easter dress... she was able to make some very nice business and casual attire for herself... and some shirts for my brother and me...

But there are also women... who can just cut fabric and sew it together... they know themselves or their models so well... that they can just cut and sew without using a pattern... for them... the pattern is an archetype... which means that every dress is really the same... even though some are casual and some are formal... it's understanding that every blouse is really the same... even though some are short sleeve and some are long sleeve... it's experiencing how every pair of curtains is the same... even though some are sheer and some are lined... and for these women... the pattern doesn't exist in the world but exists beyond it... and in a sense... they almost just speak their project into being... and I believe these kinds of archetypes exist all around us...

This morning's reading from Isaiah is this kind of archetype... written about 800 years before Jesus was born... this text affirms that on God's holy mountain... God will prepare a feast for us better than any restaurant buffet... though not better than this morning's breakfast... will wipe away our tears of regret from all the dumb things we've done or may still do... will take away any disgrace from what we did in college and hoped no one would find out about... and yes I have some of those things too... will

wipe away our tears as only a loving mother could... and here's the best part... God will destroy the shroud that is cast over all people... and will swallow up death forever... and we will say... *now this is what we've been waiting for...*

I mean can't you feel... don't you know... that this is how it's meant to be... I remember when I was just old enough to know about dying... I knew that there was something about the finality of it that didn't make sense... something about it... some transcendent truth... that just didn't feel right...

Now I've talked and written during Lent... about the need to be vulnerable... about our collective need to overcome certainty... and to embrace vulnerability... when we don't... when we *pretend* to be certain... or invulnerable... it's like being a cup that's so full there's no room for anything else... but our vulnerability opens us up to the workings of the Holy Spirit... to its purifying fire which lovingly burns away all that keeps us from reflecting the mind of Christ...

Brother Thomas Merton wrote... for the Christian... there is no defeat... because Christ is risen and lives in us... and Christ has overcome all that seeks to destroy us... or to block our human and spiritual growth... but the risen life is not easy... because it is also a dying life... the presence of the resurrection in our lives also means the presence of the cross... for we do not rise with Christ... unless we also first die with him...

And instead of being failures... or losses... these little deaths are really victories... because we die to certainty and are born to Mystery... these little deaths increasingly carry us from boundaries to boundlessness... from slavery to freedom... from the finite to the infinite... our vulnerabilities become the vehicles which carry us to God...

And the Book of Wisdom echoes Isaiah when we read... the souls of the righteous are in God's hands... torment cannot touch them... the foolish think they have died... and

thought their departure was a disaster... that it was their destruction... their punishment... but they are at peace... and their hope is full of immortality...

In the garden... Mary asks the angels if they know where Jesus' body has been taken... *they* already know about his immortality... she is about to learn... but we can imagine how devastated she must have felt... like those whose loved ones have experienced any kind of tragic death... all she wants for him is a proper burial... but when she sees Jesus... she doesn't recognize him... we sometimes fail to recognize him too...

Gail O'Day... the Dean of Wake Forest University's School of Divinity writes: the Gospel reader's first experience of the risen Jesus... is in the story's commentary... we are simply told that Jesus is standing there in the garden... since we have watched Jesus be killed and buried in his tomb... and have seen that the tomb is empty... the Jesus who stands in the garden can only be the resurrected Jesus... yet John presents him with no fanfare... this is because readers have already seen the empty tomb... and so we know God's power over death... the heart of the Easter proclamation... resides in the moment when we too... like Mary... are claimed by the truth of the resurrection...

But watching the recognition dawn in her eyes... when Jesus shows that he knows her... when he calls her by name... is like watching two siblings... who may have been separated as children... by war or other disaster... reunite after forty or more years... the joy is palpable...

But he tells her not to hold on to him... he also means for her not to keep him for and to herself... she's commissioned to go and tell the others what she's seen and heard... to be an evangelist...

And through the resurrection... we know that God has vindicated Jesus' love in action... but resurrected life is not about us... if we want to keep the focus on ourselves... we don't need resurrection... resurrection is about others... it's about change... about being

open to the new patterns of life which exist as archetypes... and that we are called to sew together and wear... so that we... and our relationships... can be made new... if we want to change the oppressive systems which Empire has established... if we want to overturn modern day money changer's tables... we need resurrection... and if we want to see the miracles into which God has already invited us... then we need to bend down and look into our own tombs... look into the ways we have overcome death... and then we too can tell the story... and each one of us can also proclaim: I have seen the Lord.

Alleluia! Happy Easter.

Mike+