

Isaiah 65:17-25
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Luke 24:1-12

Easter Morning Sermon April 21st 2019

God Speaks to Us in the Empty Tomb's of Our Lives

The women have spent the last couple of days grieving steadily after witnessing the inhumane suffering and death of their teacher and friend Jesus. They are hurting. They are exhausted from the mix of emotions they are feeling. Anger. sadness. fear. Hopelessness. Is the Jesus movement really dead? What will they do now? What will life be like without Jesus in it?

As part of their grieving ritual they need to go to the tomb, which is a small cave, to anoint Jesus' body with spices. So, at the break of dawn they arrive at the tomb hoping to anoint Jesus. Hoping to pay their respects to Jesus. Unfortunately, when they get there the stone is rolled away and his body is no where to be found. They are perplexed, which I tend to read as panic-like confusion.

Then in the midst of the women's confusion as they stand there grieving together in this empty tomb, two messengers appear to them on God's behalf to reassure them of Jesus' promise. Jesus is not dead, but has risen. Jesus will breathe new life into them empowering them to continue God's kingdom movement in the world. The women come away from the tomb feeling renewed and motivated to tell the others.

Like the women who followed Jesus, how often do we find ourselves standing in an empty tomb feeling perplexed? Wondering where Jesus is? Wondering if we can continue to live out our faith?

When we grieve the death of a person we love, like the women who followed Jesus, we find ourselves standing in the empty tomb trying to figure it all out. We feel a mix of emotions. We worry about what our life will look like without this person in it. We wonder if we will have the energy to keep living with faith and purpose.

We stand there in the empty tomb longing to see God's presence. Longing to heal. Longing to be renewed.

Then something happens that reassures us of God's presence and promise. A friend's caring love comforts us. A bible story resonates with us giving us hope in God's redeeming love. A worship service lifts us up leaving us feeling renewed. A prayer leaves us with God's peace. A spiritual experience of our loved one or of nature reassures us that we are still connected to those who have gone before us. Our experience and witness of God's baptismal waters reassures us of our connection with

our Creator. Our taste of Christ's body and blood gives us hope in God's forgiving and reconciling love.

Like our experience with grief, there are times throughout our lives where we find ourselves standing in the empty tomb trying to figure it all out. Longing to experience God's healing and redeeming love. An illness. A broken relationship. A loss of job. An unexpected moment. A tragedy. A natural disaster. A crisis of faith.

Like our experience with grief, in the other moments when we are standing there in the empty tomb thinking it is completely hopeless, we once again experience God in the midst of all the perplexity. We experience God in the empty tombs of our lives, reminding us of God's promise. Jesus is not dead, but alive. We are healed and redeemed.

Or in other words, we come to the realization that things will work out. God will be there. We are not alone. Like the women at the tomb, we will feel renewed. Empowered to share this good news to others. Empowered to reflect the love of Christ Jesus to all we meet.

The Easter story gives us hope that no matter how many Fridays and Saturdays we have to endure, Sunday is just around the corner. Jesus' healing and redemptive love is but a moment away. Jesus will meet us on the road to Emmaus. Jesus will meet us behind locked doors. Jesus will meet us by the sea. Jesus will meet us on the mountain top. Jesus will meet us at the empty tomb. Jesus will meet us at the baptismal font. Jesus will meet us at the pulpit. Jesus will meet us at the altar. Jesus will meet us at the piano. Jesus will meet us in the midst of our suffering, giving us hope that Jesus isn't dead. But alive. Our suffering and death isn't what defines us. God's life-giving love is what defines us. Jesus has risen indeed! Alleluia!

Let us pray, loving God we give thanks for your Son Jesus and this Easter story that breathes hope, healing, and redemption into our lives. Open our eyes to see this healing and redeeming love impacting our lives everyday. Inspire us with this Easter story, so that we too will go out in the world reflecting your hope, healing, and redemptive love to all we meet. **Amen.**