

Sermon April 12th Easter Sunday

Jesus Meets Us on the Road of Uncertainty

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, which scholars believe is Mary the mother of Jesus, are heading to the tomb. Matthew doesn't give us a reason why the women are heading to the tomb so quickly after the Sabbath? Mark and Luke tell us that they are coming to finish off the burial ritual they were unable to do on Friday, because Jesus died right before the Sabbath begun. However, if we read Matthew on its own we don't have this information. What we do know from Matthew's narrative is that their last 48 hours have been filled with insurmountable pain as they witnessed everything Jesus went through from his arrest to the abuse he took in the court yards to his torturous death.

What they must have felt and thought on that long walk to the tomb. Their futures so uncertain. Who will they follow now? Who will save them from this oppression? How will they be able to move on without Jesus in their lives? Mary Magdalene a good friend. The other Mary, Jesus' Mother. Two people who were very close to Jesus. Now filled with Sadness. Scared for their own lives. Feeling despair over their future. Confused at how this all went down. They are travelling on the road of uncertainty to a tomb where they, at the very least, expect to see Jesus' body.

So, they get to the tomb. Suddenly they experience a great earthquake followed by an angel who comes and rolls back the stone. The guards who are standing there fall breathless to the ground. Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of Jesus's confusion and fears are magnified as they try to figure out what is going on.

Then the angel speaks, reassuring the women not to be afraid, because Jesus has risen. I can imagine the look on their faces in that moment. Like the look you give someone, when they tell you something you think is completely bonkers. The angel invites them to see the empty tomb for themselves. Then commissions them to go tell the others.

So, off they go, still scared as everything they ever knew is challenged by this surprising event. But, also, feeling joy, at the prospect that if Jesus is alive they will get to meet him again. There is a new hope dwelling inside them that wasn't there a few moments ago. Even as their uncertainty of what has happened, and what they knew to believe is still present.

There are times in our lives where we face grief. Where we feel confused, afraid, anxious, sad, angry. Where like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, we are walking down the road of uncertainty towards the tomb.

For example, you are dealing with a break up of a relationship. You are walking down this road of uncertainty not knowing what will come of your life without this person. You feel scared, anxious, sad, angry. Confused at how this all fell apart. Will you be able to move on and pick up the pieces of your life?

Or someone you love has died. Or you lost your job. Or you have to move. Or the places you love to gather have closed down. Or your health is deteriorating, and you no longer can walk or remember special moments in your life. There are events throughout our lives where we find ourselves walking down this road of uncertainty. Feeling afraid, anxious, sad, confused, angry.

As we deal with this pandemic many of us are experiencing these feelings. Bombarded by thoughts and questions as we try to make sense of this mess. Why is this happening to us? What if someone I love gets sick? What if I get sick? What will our future look like when this is all said and done? When will we get back to the normal we were used to? Or will we be able to live in what was? Everything I thought I knew is being challenged. We are all walking with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus on this road of uncertainty.

We might even come across an angel or two sitting on the stone pointing us to the empty tomb. Showing us where God's redemptive love is acting in our lives. For example, the new friend you meet who brings new meaning to your life. Helping you let go of the person who is no longer in relationship with you.

Or the community of friends who call you every day helping you see that you are not alone when your loved one dies. Helping you redefine your life in this new state of being.

Or the support staff who help you cope with your deteriorating health.

Or all the new ways we are learning to connect with one another during these challenging times. Valuing our relationships more. Taking more time out of our days to communicate with one another.

Or all the people who continue to help us get the essential things we need during this period of physical distancing. All the people who are helping those who are sick. All the people who are trying to keep us from sinking down deeper financially. All the religious leaders trying to keep us connected to God and one another through online studies and worship. All the people who give us hope that when the sun finally rises on this darkness we will bear witness to the risen Christ.

There are angels along the way that point us to where God's redemptive love is acting in our lives. Like Mary Magdalene and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, we still stand with some uncertainty, afraid of where this new path will lead us. However, like the two

Mary's, Jesus meets us along the road of uncertainty. Jesus meets us. Embraces us. And instructs us to share the good news with others.

Jesus meets us on the road of uncertainty and gives us at least one thing to be certain about. Jesus is present with us. Jesus is acting in our lives healing us and redeeming us from our pain. Jesus's mission of love and grace is very much still alive as we face this pandemic. As we face moments of grief in our lives. Jesus is not dead, but alive.

As Paul says in our reading of Colossians, we have been raised with Christ. We have been given the faith and the love to endure. To grieve. To lament. To stand in the midst of this uncertainty with hope. Running to tell the others that on this road of uncertainty we met the Risen Christ.

Let us pray, gracious God, as we stand on this road of uncertainty we lament to you. We lift up to you our fears, anxieties, sadness, anger, and confusion. We ask for your help and your guidance as we travel along this road. Turn our hearts towards your comforting presence. Give us what we need to trust in your gracious love. We give thanks that you send us angels along the way to point us to where you are working in our world. And we give thanks that you send us your Son who meets us in the midst of our uncertainty and gives us certainty in your presence and redeeming love. **Amen.**

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