

## Sermon Easter Vigil Service

### *Sometimes It Is Hard to See Where God Is at Work in Our Lives*

Peter and the beloved disciple are anxious after hearing from Mary that the stone to the tomb had been removed. So, they run towards the tomb to see what is going on. When they get there, Peter and the beloved disciple look inside, and see that Jesus' body isn't there. Peter is confused. Remember, in this moment, there is no angel to proclaim that Jesus has risen. There is no experience of the resurrected Christ. Peter and the beloved disciple are left pondering this mystery. Trying to see where God is at work in this moment. Wondering what actually happened to Jesus' body. As they head back home.

Continuing with our story, Mary is still there, confused, hurt, angry that someone might have taken Jesus' body. Suddenly, two angels appear to reassure Mary that Jesus is not dead but has risen. Unfortunately, this message doesn't sink in as Mary is so filled with grief.

So, another person approaches her, and Mary accuses him of taking Jesus' body somewhere. It isn't till Jesus says her name that she recognizes that it is Jesus. And then is empowered and commissioned to go tell the others where God is at work in this moment.

Like Peter, the beloved disciple, and Mary, we come across moments in our lives that are unexplainable, that leave us with a mystery. Making it hard for us to see where God is at work in our lives.

For example, I had just broken up with my girlfriend, and reality sank in. She didn't really like me. She was using me. My friends had been telling me this for weeks, but when we think we are in love we can tune out all the noise around us. I was so angry from this revelation that I lost it. I started punching this phone booth. Something we don't see anymore in our communities.

I remember everyone around me backing up. Afraid to come near me. Laughing or judging me in some manner. Except for this person who could see that I was really hurting, and approached me. He helped calm me down, and gave me some perspective on the situation. I don't know why. But his words really sank in for me, and I felt more at peace about what happened. Till this day I believe this person might have been an angel that God sent to me. Like Peter, I lived in the mystery for a while. Wondering if this was just a nice person who helped me out or an angel sent by God. Like Peter, I was trying to figure out where God was working in my life in this moment.

Or, I remember hearing a story about a person whose car flipped over, and the vehicle started on fire. It was in the middle of the night and no cars had passed by on this particular highway. Suddenly an individual pulled this person out before the car exploded. This person never saw this individual again. Soon the paramedics arrived on the scene, and this person lived to tell the story. Afterwards, like Peter, like myself, this person reflected on the mystery before them. Who was this individual who pulled me from the car? Was God working through this person in this moment in my life? Was this person an angel sent by God?

I'm sure we all have a story or two where we found ourselves standing in one of the great mysteries of our lives wondering if and where God is acting in our lives in these moments?

Like Peter, the beloved disciple, and Mary, we come across moments where our pain, our suffering, make it hard for us to see where God is at work in our lives.

For example, when we grieve the death of a loved one. It can be hard for us to see where God is working in our lives to heal and redeem us. Sometimes the pain can be so great that we can't see the friend who comes over to hold our hand. Or the stranger who offers to give us a hug when we break down in the middle of a grocery store. Or words of a comforting bible verse that seems to keep showing up in our memory. Or the adult child who refuses to let us sit at home all day staring at our loved one's picture. Sometimes it is hard for us to see God working in our lives to heal and redeem us when we are suffering so immensely.

Well, in our gospel, we see that when we are standing in the mystery. When the tears keep coming. Jesus calls out our names. Jesus finds a way to get our attention and show us that yes, Jesus is here. God is working in and through the resurrected Christ to heal and redeem us from our suffering.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for not giving up on us when we struggle to see where you are at work in our lives. Thank you for the resurrected Christ who calls out our names. Who grabs our attention. Who affirms that we are loved by you. And who reassures us that we will experience your healing and redemption from our suffering.

**Amen.**

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