

April 1st 2018 Easter Day

Scripture:

Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

John 20: 1-18

“Hallelujah, He is Risen!”

“There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.

The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” --- the resurrection from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

And then Mark’s Gospel ---- “With God all things are possible.”

When Jesus says ---- as He does in Mark’s Gospel --- “With man this is impossible --- but not with God ----- all things are possible with God.” --- He may as well have been referring to His resurrection.

God has raised His Son from the dead.

It is astonishing.

Marvelous --- wonderful to enjoy.

Beyond words --- beyond comprehension.

Incredible --- awe inspiring ---- life giving and life sustaining.

Everything changes --- and in an instant.

And the only way any of this --- rising from the dead ---- salvation from sin -
----- could have ever happened is by the hand of God.

“With God all things are possible.”

“With man this is impossible --- but not with God ----- all things are possible with God.”

It's so easy to lose our sense of awe --- and wonder --- and amazement.

When was the last time you were truly amazed by something?

When was the last time you were totally awe struck?

When was the last time you saw something ---- or thought about something - --- or witnessed something and said ---- “That is truly incredible ----- that is truly inconceivable?”

When was the last time you saw something or thought about something or witnessed something and said --- “That is God at work --- that could only ever have happened at God's hand?”

Because that is what happened at the resurrection ----- God acted and everyone was absolutely awestruck --- the inconceivable had happened --- a human body that had stopped working ---- the way every human body dies Jesus died --- lack of oxygen to the brain --- and then days later the body came back to life --- inconceivable ---- not possible ---- not humanly possible --- possibly only by and act of God.

When was the last time you were a stopped dead in your tracks and found the only explanation to be an act of God?

The resurrection was inconceivable.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb on Easter morning looking for the dead body.

She went to the cemetery for the same reason anyone has ever gone to the cemetery to visit the dead.

No one ever goes to the cemetery to witness a resurrection --- and it was no different for Mary on Easter Day.

Listen again to the very beginning of John's gospel reading this morning.

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!””

Mary doesn’t even look into the tomb --- it’s not until verse 11 that she looks in to the tomb see what is there --- or more appropriately what isn’t there.

John 20 begins with --- “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!””

Mary goes to the tomb --- and notice it’s still dark ---- the sun hasn’t come up yet and Jesus is already gone --- resurrected.

Mary goes to the tomb ---- sees that the stone is rolled away --- doesn’t even stop to look in --- but runs away and tells Peter and the also the disciple Jesus loved --- that someone has taken Jesus away and she doesn’t know where.

Mary goes to the cemetery for the same reason we all go to cemeteries -----
----- to visit the dead.

But something else has happened.

God has happened ---- God has acted.

The only way to explain what has happened is --- an act of God.

When is the last time we have been apprehended --- stopped in our tracks ---
by an act of God?

Today as Christians ---- hopefully we all have had that feeling --- that realization --- that revelation ---- like Mary had --- that God has acted.

“With man this is impossible --- but not with God ----- all things are possible with God.”

It isn't until Jesus speaks that Mary realizes it's Him.

It isn't until Jesus speaks that Mary realizes God has acted.

The first part of John 20 is the empty tomb --- verse 1-10.

The second part is Jesus revealing himself to Mary ---- John 20:11-18.

Listen again to how it unfolds ---- beginning at verse 11 from John 20 ---

“Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don't know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).”

This time when Mary returns to the tomb she takes the time to stoop down and look inside.

And she sees 2 angels --- and they converse.

But it isn't until Jesus speaks to her that she realizes the miracle that has transpired.

“I have seen the Lord” --- is her great proclamation in verse 18.

“I have seen the Lord.”

Like Mary we have all gone somewhere --- seen something --- been uncertain ---- thought the lesser thing --- “They’ve taken away His body” --- - as opposed to “He is Risen.”

Like Mary --- we have all gone somewhere --- seen something --- experienced something we can’t quite explain ----- something beyond just human actions

And thankfully also like Mary when we hear the voice of God --- the voice of our Risen Lord ---- our eyes --- and our hearts --- can be opened in an instant.

“Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out “Teacher”.”

What a powerful moment of revelation.

Jesus says her name --- and she immediately knows it’s Him.

It reminds me of Jesus’ words earlier in John’s Gospel ---- chapter 10 verse 27 ---

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

It is only when Jesus says Mary’s name that she recognizes Him.

Sometimes we too see things --- experience things --- but don’t necessarily recognize these things as acts of God until we hear the voice of God addressing us.

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

After hearing the voice of God ---- and this is verse 18 from John’s Gospel today --- after hearing the voice of God --- Jesus ---

“Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.”

This is Mary's --- "Hallelujah, He is Risen." --- moment.

And off she goes to share the Good News of Jesus Christ the Risen One.

When is the last time you heard the voice of God ---- the voice of your Risen Lord?

And when was the last time you went off like Mary to share this Good News full of excitement and joy and passion?

Easter Life --- Easter News --- the Good News of Jesus Christ ---- "Hallelujah He is Risen" --- is so beautiful --- and so massive --- and so contagious --- it practically bursts out of Mary like sweat through her pores - --- exhales out of her lungs.

Remember in verse 2 in John's Gospel today Mary ran to the disciples ---- "So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

There's an urgency here --- Mary must find Him --- "So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

And there is no doubt some urgency when in verse 18 ---- "Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her."

It's all so incredibly moving this Easter morning narrative that John so passionately shares.

Mary is running --- the disciples are running --- the disciple look in to the empty tomb ----- and as verse 8 says --- "He saw and believed."

And then as verse 9 also says --- but they didn't fully understand --- "They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead." --- verse 9 reads.

And then Mary is crying ----- verse 11--- “Mary stood outside the tomb crying.” --- and then Mary leans in and takes a look inside ----“as she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb” --- also verse 11.

And then there are angels and they speak --- asking Mary ----- in verse 13 ---
- “Woman, why are you crying?”

And then Mary speaks --- “They have taken my Lord away.” --- “And I don’t know where they have put him.”

And then there is Jesus.

And then there is Jesus calling Mary by name.

Verse 16 --- “Jesus said to her “Mary”.”

And then suddenly --- in an instant ---- it’s as if the whole scene ----- slows down --- you know in movies where everything suddenly slows down into ultra slow motion.

Well that’s kind of what happens here ---- there has been running --- and more running --- and weeping --- and confusion --- there has been ---- ----
“Where is he” --- and there has been --- “They have taken Him away and I don’t know where they have put him.”

And then whole story slows down suddenly --- and Mary’s eyes are opened and she is no longer frantically searching for a lost dead body ---- instead she is suddenly face to face with her Risen Lord.

“She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic --- “Rabboni” ---- which means “Teacher”.)”

What sweet relief for Mary.

Imagine the joy and elation and wonder and awe --- she must have felt when she turned and cried out ----- “Teacher.”

That is Mary’s ---- “Hallelujah ---- He is Risen” ---- moment.

Her first ---- Hallelujah --- He is Risen moment.

Anybody remember their very first ----- “Hallelujah He is Risen moment?”
 ----- anybody remember their last ---- most recent ---- “Hallelujah --- He is Risen moment?”

Those times when God suddenly seizes us ---- and we experience something that we know only God could do.

Those moments when ----in the words of Jesus Christ --- we suddenly realize ---- “With man this is impossible --- but not with God ----- all things are possible with God.”

Mary went from ---- “They have taken Lord away ---and I don’t know where they have out him.” --- to crying out ---- “Teacher” ---- to finding the disciples and sharing --- “I have seen the Lord.” ---- in a very very short period of time --- mere minutes.

Our lives of faith can turn on a dime --- in mere minutes ---- if we just listen for the voice of our Risen Lord in our midst.

Mary goes to the tomb ----- the stone is rolled away --- she’s off and running ----- she doesn’t even stop to look into the tomb ---- where is He? -----
 ----- where is His body --- where have they taken it --- I must find it --- panic --- anxiety --- concern --- uncertainty.

And then ----- “Mary.”

The voice of Christ --- “Mary.”

In that instant everything changes --- suddenly all is well.

The Risen one has called out to her --- has called her by name.

And she knows His voice ---- turning she cried out to Him --- “Teacher.”

That’s the power of the voice and presence of God in our lives.

No hesitation ---- no questioning ---- no --- “Who was that?” ---- “What was that?” --- “What did He say --- was He speaking to me?”

Just ---- “Teacher.”

Just --- “Teacher.”

And then off she goes to share the Good News of her Risen Lord.

“Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.”

Hallelujah ---- way to go Mary.

Hallelujah ----- way to go God.

Hallelujah ----- He is Risen.

“With man this is impossible --- but not with God ----- all things are possible with God.”

Words hardly do justice to the Easter miracle.

In fact Words never do justice to the miracles of God.

They just are ---- in all of their radiant beauty ---- goodness --- and ---- truth.

Hallelujah ----- He is Risen.

Hallelujah to Easter.

Hallelujah to new life.

Hallelujah to everlasting life.

Hallelujah to the resurrection.

Hallelujah for the forgiveness of sins.

Hallelujah for the end of death.

Hallelujah for the triumph over evil and sin.

Hallelujah ---- for the glory of God.

Hallelujah ----- He is Risen.

Hallelujah ----- He is Lord.

Hallelujah ----- He is Risen.

Amen.