

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
Albuquerque, NM  
Easter Sermon April 21, 2019  
Text: Luke 24:1-12  
Title: Remembering Resurrection

In the predawn darkness they came to the garden bearing spices and ointments for burial, ready to honor the one whom they loved. It was an errand of deep affection and grief as they continued to say goodbye to one who had made them feel more alive than ever through his presence, teaching and healing.

It had been the most devastating week of their lives. Their beloved friend and teacher had endured the most humiliating death and now he was gone forever. A yawning hole had opened up in the life of their community and nothing could fill it. The hope that they had felt was gone. The strange and wonderful teacher they followed was silent. And now what were they to do, were they to somehow go back to the way things had been, back to an old normal they only vaguely remembered.

Perhaps you can relate to these women headed for the tomb in the early light. Maybe you've found yourself dealing with death in one of its many forms: the loss of a loved one, taken too early from your life, a relationship that ended and the wound is still aching, a way of life that has changed as you have aged. We all know about death in one way or another. We know the deep discomfort it brings, the challenge of change, the desire to have it go away, to cover the stench of it over with spices, or that somehow you could go back to the way things were.

Walking to the tomb they carried their spices in jars, fragrant offerings of their love and loss. But how would they reach the body of Jesus. Who would roll back the large stone from the entrance to the tomb?

As they approach they begin to feel like something is drastically wrong. The stone securing the tomb has been rolled away. Entering they discover that their beloved is not there. The world is upside down again and they are confused. Where is the one whom they loved?

Suddenly they are dazzled by two men in the tomb. The women bow down before these fierce and beautiful creatures. In the midst of all of this the women receive a mild chastisement, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen."

I've always loved this question. "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" This is such a human experience, such a pattern in our lives. Do we really think that new life will come out of our old habits? Will the relationship that just didn't work suddenly change? Do we cling to ways that aren't working hoping to get different

results? Are you living inside your regrets hoping that it will bring a new future? Why do we look for the living among the dead?

The messengers remind the women of what Jesus had told them. "He is risen" Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee that the "Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, be crucified and on the third day rise again." (Luke 24:6,7). That is what is really happening.

To re-member is to put the pieces back together. To take the fragments of our lives and mend them back into something resembling wholeness. That is what the women at the tomb are invited to do, to "Remember Resurrection."

Remembering Resurrection is the antidote to Looking for the living among the dead. What does remembering resurrection mean? To remember resurrection is to remember that death is not the final word, the end is life, not death. To remember resurrection is to realize that if Christ is Risen we are not alone. To remember resurrection is to know that even what looks like a magnificent defeat, can be a glorious victory in the hands of God. To remember resurrection is to know that forgiveness is possible, that relationships can be mended and restored in the loving power of God at work within us. To remember resurrection is to know deep in your bones that God loves us and walked among us to demonstrate that love. To remember resurrection is to realize that there are more than just second chances, that God is cheering for us to come home. To remember resurrection is to know that while all may look dark and desolate, God has a different view and can bring life out of what looks like death.

I believe we all need to be reminded of the power of Resurrection. We are fickle human beings. We forget. We grow cynical. We give up. We get depressed. We get distracted. We believe the press releases of the enemy. We get worn down and tired. We get lazy and complacent. We lose perspective and decide that what we see is what we get. We go back to the same thing that killed us last time. We all look for the living among the dead.

Every Sunday is a little Easter in the life of the church, a moment where we try like... heaven to remember resurrection. We gather as a community of faith. We sing. We feast. We preach. We read odd stories. We direct our prayers to God. We remember. To remember resurrection is to cultivate a dangerous memory. It's a memory that tells us that God is not done redeeming and repairing the world. Resurrection is an unnerving truth. You think God has been vanquished, been pushed out of the world, finished, done, neutralized, made irrelevant. But then the messengers in dazzling clothes remind us of a deeper mystery that stirs in all creation. God is not finished. God is not dead. God is in the resurrection business. God loves bringing newness out of death and anywhere we see that happening that is a sign God is at work.

Luke's account of the resurrection is so spare. There is hardly any detail and there is really hardly any description of the resurrection in the New Testament except in the

most fragmentary way. There is really no poetry about it, nothing like the shepherds in the fields watching their flocks by night and suddenly there are multitudes of angels singing. No there is hardly any description at all. Instead it is simply proclaimed as a fact. Christ is Risen! In fact the very existence of the New Testament itself proclaims it. And without that proclamation we would not be sitting here today. Unless something very real indeed took place on that strange confusing morning there would be no New Testament, no Church, no Christianity.

So lest someone get the wrong idea, I'm not trying to reduce the resurrection to some quaint metaphor or poetic expression of new life and second chances though I do think that the resurrection of Jesus has everything to do with them. But what I can tell you is this: what I believe happened and what in faith and with great joy I proclaim to you here today at St. Mark's is by the power of God Jesus got up from the tomb, with life in him again, and the glory upon him. And he went to speak with his disciples, to tell them "Don't be afraid." He reminded them to love one another and to continue to do what he had showed them.

Oh, its fine if you want to see it all as an idle tale. You are in good company. Even some of Jesus' best friends and disciples had a hard time taking the news in, Resurrection? Are you kidding!? Are you feeling ok? When was the last time you saw a doctor? Have you taken your meds?

When we decide to remember resurrection we become extremely dangerous as a people.

To Re-Member is to put the pieces back together. To remember is to take the fragments of our lives and begin to reassemble them into something beautiful and meaningful to motivate us, because we see what God wants to do, how God wants to make people whole, how God wants people to care for one another, how God desires for people to respect the dignity of every human being. To Remember Resurrection is to know that God can heal our brokenness. If God can overcome death and the grave, then the rules of engagement are changed. If Jesus can storm the citadel of death and live to tell about it then we are connected to something powerful and that of course makes the rulers of this world a little anxious.

What if we were to stop looking for the living among the dead and start remembering resurrection?

Long ago I opened a book of poetry and read these stunning lines on the inside leaf of the book, written by Hayden Carruth:

*Re-assemble the fragments of Love  
Within yourself,  
Only then will you have true courage.*

When I read those lines something in me shifted for good. I realized that my life was fragmented and broken, that I was in need of repair. I knew deep down that I had the capacity to love but I was so hurting that it was difficult to do so.

I also realized that this is what God wanted to do for me or in me. God wanted to make me whole. God wanted to give me something beautiful, the courage to live and love again instead of looking for the living among the dead.

Every week we come to this place of worship, not to make a show of our spiritual life, not to tick off some religious obligation box, not to try to be a good person. We come here to offer up the fragments of our lives on the altar of God in the hopes that the one who was wounded, suffered and died and rose from the dead will work that healing in us. We come here not because we have our act together, not because we are performing some perfectionistic ruse, we come because we need to be healed, to be made whole, we come to remember resurrection.

Each week we are on a journey into the dimension of the kingdom of God, the place of resurrection. We are hoping to be renewed, to catch a glimpse of the risen one, to be reminded that God is in the resurrection business, bringing new life out of what looks like disaster, bringing forgiveness out of estrangement, bringing hope out of despair, bringing friendship out of loneliness, bringing a community into being out of a collection of hurting individuals. That is what we are doing here.

We re-member the saving love of God each week we gather, not just on Easter Sunday but on every Sunday. And we make it available to us here and now. That is what this dangerous memory is all about. Why? Because we are incorrigibly forgetful people. We forget about resurrection. We get stuck in our everydayness. We easily return to our habits of looking for the living among the dead. We are like the women going to the tomb carrying spices and perfume to the land of the dead.

The truth is that we cannot talk about it enough. We cannot remember resurrection enough. We live in a culture of death. We're surrounded by our consumerist culture, dedicated to the status quo, immune to human need, inert to the demands of compassion. Remembering Resurrection is the antidote to the illness of our age. Resurrection is the hidden power of the people of God. There is no use to search for the living among the dead. Christ is Alive. He is not here.

This is not a quaint little truth that you can stuff into an Easter basket as much as we may try. Maybe every Easter Egg you open this year should say, "Surprise Remember Resurrection." Or "Look for signs of new life and there you will find God at work." Or "Resurrection is in the very fabric of the universe." Or "God is a God of second chances and you seem to need one." or "Death cannot stop God from Loving you."

I suppose I don't have much new to say. The Easter proclamation is pretty simple really: Christ is alive and that makes all the difference! The only thing that is new is your response.

The resurrection is either the power of God that overcomes the world's death dealing ways or it is an idle tale.

Will you Remember Resurrection? Will you practice resurrection? If you will then there is nothing that you cannot do in the power of God's love that is stronger than death: love your enemies, forgive one another, heal the earth, push back hate, overcome fear, change the world.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!