



Easter Day, Year A – April 24, 2010

John 20. 1-18

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

“Woman, why are you weeping.”

Oh, if they could only know! If these angels only knew the trials of the past week then they would not ask why I was weeping! Hailed as a king, palm branches laid out before him, my teacher and my friend! But those people are so fickle. They wanted a conqueror, a king on a chariot with swords and armour and were disappointed when Jesus was not what they expected. I love him so much that I cannot imagine anyone being disappointed in him, a teacher who brought us, for the first time, a message of hope.

Why am I weeping? I am weeping because only days after the people of Jerusalem hailed his arrival they condemned him to die! They set free an inciter named Barabbas rather than my beloved king, my gentle, comforting and yet challenging companion. They called for his death and what a horrible death it was. Betrayed and abandoned by even his closest companions he was left alone there on the cross to die.

Why am I weeping? I weep because I have lost all hope, I have lost my best friend and my only teacher. I have lost the one person who gave me something to believe in, something to look forward to. Gone. Taken by death and now gone again. I cannot even mourn at his gravesite because someone has taken his body away.

Why am I weeping? I have been weeping for days and as the tears chase one another down my cheeks I know that there is a never ending store of them for him. For Jesus. For my king. I will never stop weeping. There is no more joy in me. I have lost everything. I am alone.

“Mary”

With that word, those two simple syllables, Mary's heart leapt with joy. Mary. The most beautiful sound in the world is the sound of our name being spoken by someone we love and on that day so long ago Mary knew that it was indeed Jesus who was breathing her name. The tears of sorrow, of lost hope and despair were replaced with tears of happiness, immense relief and unimaginable joy.

This is the story of Easter. Earlier in the Gospel of John it says "He calls his own sheep by name... and the sheep follow him because they know his voice." Jesus knows our every thought, our every desire, he knows our very heart, and of course, he calls us all by name. If Jesus had not come out of the grave, if Jesus had not shown himself to his followers then he might have been yet another of our great prophets read about in scripture but not celebrated in the Eucharist. We, indeed, would not be Christians, called to follow his commandment to love one another and to spread the good news of hope and salvation. We would certainly not be gathered in a building such as this readying ourselves to receive Christ as part of us. If Jesus had not met Mary in the garden he might be just a footnote in the annals of history.

In Psalm 139 we hear the psalmist recounting how God knows us, knows our inner most beings from time before we were born. God knows each of us, all who are born, but through Christ we are known in a unique way. We are known in a way that we may not always sense or recognize. It is not because Jesus is not with us but rather because we have not taken the time to notice.

As Mary sits weeping at her loss she looks right at Jesus but mistakes him as the gardener. She does not recognize him as the teacher and friend that she so sorely misses. Even in the face of him she remains in her state of sorrow and it is

not until he speaks her name...“Mary” that it dawns on her that this is indeed the man, her teacher, her friend, her king. She does not question. She does not declare the impossibility of what she is seeing. Rather she tries to throw herself into the arms of the man she knew to be dead.

The idea of resurrection is one of the sticking points for folks outside these walls of the Church. It is one of the tenants of our faith tradition that cannot be easily reconciled with today’s scientific thought. Jesus, there in the garden after three days in the tomb, greeting a weeping Mary with love and a whisper, this is the image that nay-sayers cannot accept. To be resurrected is to be raised up, and we know that Jesus was indeed raised up. Without this he might be another footnote in history, yet another prophet in the scriptures.

We are called to faith. Without doubt there can be no faith because without doubt there is only knowing. We are not called to discern, we are called to believe. We are not called into certainty, but we are called to enter into the mystery. We are not called to know, we are called to have faith. Question? Yes. Study? Yes. Debate? Certainly, but in the end we are called to have faith in a mystery greater than our ability to comprehend.

And like Mary in the garden, like Mary who mourned the loss of her companion, there are times when we may not recognize Christ when we come face to face with him. And that’s OK. That’s OK because in the resurrection, in conquering death, Jesus continues to call to each us of by name.

Let yourself fall into the mystery of faith, into the miracle of the resurrection for today, on this day, Jesus Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Alleluia!