

Christ is Risen; There's Work To Do

Peter and John were racing toward the tomb. They had heard a strange story from Mary Magdalene. Mary often told them strange things. Rumor had it she was once possessed by demons until she met Jesus, who helped her to think straight again. But Jesus had died on a cross. John saw it with his own eyes. Peter was too ashamed to watch, because three times he had denied ever knowing who Jesus was. But he knew from John's witness that Jesus had died and was buried in a hollow tomb with a big rock on top of it.

And then three days later Mary showed up wild-eyed, early in the morning. She had been to the tomb. It was open. The body was gone. So Peter and John bolted out of the door. On they ran, the wind blowing in their hair, John with his hands clasped in fervent prayer, a worried look on his face. Peter was wild-eyed and wild-haired himself, one hand on his cloak to keep it from blowing away, the other with a single finger outstretched, as if pointing toward he knew not what. Onward they ran, into the light rising in the east.

John was younger and faster, so he got there first. He looked into the tomb and saw linen wrappings but no body. Then Peter caught up. Impetuously he burst into the space where the dead man had been. The tomb really was empty. John found the courage to go in, too. They looked at each other and saw fear changing to hope in one another's eyes. Not knowing what to do next, they silently walked home.

But Mary had followed Peter and John. She stayed at the tomb and wept. In the midst of her tears she saw two bright beings and cried out to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him!" Then she turned and saw another figure. He was simply dressed. It was still early in the morning, so she supposed him to be the gardener working in the cool of the day. "Tell me where you put him," she said, "and I will take him away." The man said, "Mary." When she heard her name, all of the fear and anxiety fled. Only one person had ever said her name like that – Jesus. She turned to him, called out "My Teacher," and dropped to her knees, holding him tight. Jesus said – for it really *was* Jesus – "Do not hold on to me, but go to my brothers and tell them that I will be going to God." Obediently, she took off again. She became the first disciple to spread the good news of the resurrection.

Mary told Peter and John. They told others. Even people who were not Jewish found out about this strange thing that had happened, and believed. The word got out of Jerusalem. It went west to Rome, and east to India and beyond. Generation after generation spread the good news of the empty tomb and the risen Christ. The news got to your ancestors, and they believed. You are here because someone you know believed and brought you here. Maybe today you are struggling with your own belief. If so, welcome to the club. That club includes Peter and John and Thomas and everyone who has ever struggled. Whatever your level of belief or of doubt, welcome to Trinity Cathedral. Welcome to this celebration of new life here today.

We have four Gospel accounts of what happened on Easter Day. Three of them are similar but differ in the details. Three of them include Jesus appearing in a resurrected body that was clearly the same but also somehow different, less recognizable. All of the Gospels agree that the tomb was empty. All have the same message: Christ is risen. Now there's work to do.

Some of that work is to tell others about Jesus. We saw that this morning. In the Gospels Jesus preaches and heals and transforms lives. Jesus is still healing and transforming lives today. Those who come to this cathedral most weeks do so because it makes a difference in their lives. They find grounding, a stabilizing force in the midst of a culture that can make us wild-eyed and wild-haired and not thinking straight. Each week Jesus comes to us here, not only in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and in words that have sustained people for centuries, but also in the relationships we build with one another.

The work of Christ goes beyond this building, however. That's why Jesus so often says "Go." "Go to my brothers," Jesus tells Mary. "Go to Galilee," he tells the disciples in Matthew and Mark. "Go make disciples of all nations," he says in Matthew. Go to where the world is hurting, where the world is desperate, where there is no hope. Go with a cup of cold water for the hot and weary. Go with bread for the hungry. Go with clothes for the naked. Go in the name of Christ. Just go.

Peter and John started this Easter Day in fear and hopelessness. They wept with grief and they could hardly move. But when a word of hope came to them from Mary Magdalene, they summoned all the energy they could muster and ran their hearts out toward the light. They found the light on that Easter morn, the light of Christ, and it transformed them forever. Even if you have fear and doubt, run like they did. Run with all your heart and soul and strength toward the light of Jesus Christ. Run to new life, new hope. I promise you that you will never be the same.

Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia! Now you have work to do.

[The Sunday of the Resurrection, Easter Sunday. John 20:1-18.]