

2008 EASTER "MARY SHOWS US EASTER"

I Peter 1:3-9 Preaching from John 20:1-18

As I stand before you on this day of Resurrection.

I celebrate with you the great events played out in the world today.

- 1, That democracy is being brought to regions of the world that never before understood the dignity of individual citizens or the joy of liberty.
2. That the World Health Organization are working around the clock to stem the tide of SARS a disease which if not fought might become another Black Plague.
3. That we have an unprecedented ability to communicate ideas and beliefs to any part and person in the world. with the computer satellite technology and we can also review what has been said for the past 20 years.
4. No other time in history have we been able to produce more goods and more medical supplies and then ship them as quickly around the world to make possible as never before, relief to the suffering in the far corners of the world.

As I watch these world changing events.

I wonder what I am doing here in this pulpit.

If the real action isn't out there shaping the world.

And then I am reminded of two things.

First, no event in history has shaped the world like the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And **Second**, life does not go on forever. There is death.

There is no military victory, no medical cure,
no global village, no messianic candidate that can prepare
any individual to face this great question in life.

And that is why I stand in this pulpit this morning.

To proclaim: Light in the midst of darkness.

Hope in the midst of despair.

And life in the midst of death.

Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

And though we die, yet shall we live again.

Charlie Brown asked Linus as they were staring up at a star-filled sky.

"Would you like to see a falling star?"

Linus responds: "Sure.. and Then again, I don't know,"

And after some thought he says:

"I'd hate to have it fall just on my account."

The Son of God, the Star of David,

fell on your account,

He came down as the Lamb of God, led to slaughter.

Crucified dead and buried, on your account.

What humility. What love and, oh, what accomplishment.

So we come today like Mary Magdalene to the tomb.
 With sobering questions on our mind
 Where is the hope? The joy? The new life?
 And we find those answers in Mary's life.
 First we discover that

I. MARY WAS A WOMAN OF DEVOTION

1Early 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. John 20:1

Mary's devotion to Jesus sent her to the tomb.
 It sent her to the place of death.
 She had followed him ever since he had cast out her evil spirit.
 You remember in the Movie the Passion of the Christ.
 Mary was portrayed as the woman wiping up Jesus Blood.

She remembered Jesus standing up for her, and so she would stand up for Him.
 She stayed by Jesus' side as He hung dying from the cross.
 She helped Joseph and Nichodemus carry the body.
 She knew very well Jesus was no criminal,
 she wasn't afraid of the mob.
 Or the soldiers guarding the tomb.

When every one else was hiding.
 John's Gospel tells us Mary came to the tomb expecting
 to find a body of her beloved Master- Jesus
 It is common for us today, we go to the place of dead, when a loved one dies.
 We go to the funeral home for visitation to find and view the body.

Imagine this scene: The casket is there.
 The flowers are there giving off an odor-ed perfume,
 Someone walks up to the casket, looks in, prepared to say something like,
 "I haven't seen Eldon look that good in years,"
 But instead all we see are satin sheets,
 the slight indentation where a body had been

Our first and most natural reaction would be,
 "Someone has taken the body away."
 We would not think the body had been stolen,
 just misplaced in some other "Slumber Room"
 as the funeral homes refer to them.

2So 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!" John 20:1-2

The empty tomb is a compelling image.
 And Mary seem to buy into this fact that the Pharisees and High Priest
 Weren't done with their treachery.

And now she suspected they had taken her Lord,
And put him somewhere else.

3So Peter and (John) the other disciple started for the tomb. John 3:3

But where are the other disciples?

Why did only two come running.

Only two follow her words to the tomb.

12Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. Luke 24:12

Peter went to check to see if it was the wrong tomb.

Or somebody stole the body,

Or the person got up and walked away.

The empty tomb does not prove that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

For some reason they did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. John 20:9

The empty tomb did not confirm belief for Mary.

But her devotion brought her there that first Easter morning.

Just as your devotion has brought you here this Easter morning.

II. MARY WAS A WOMAN OF COURAGE

When Peter and John ran back to their homes.

Mary stayed in this confusing place of death.

Because she wanted to know the truth!

10Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. John 20:10

Why Peter and John abandon this woman in the cemetery alone,

Is beyond me.

Could it have been that they knew Mary's mental history.

She wasn't just psychotic,

She had been demon-possessed.

Even Mary knew her mind could play tricks on her.

She remembered the times when the demons

made her see things that weren't there.

So she had learned to question things that did not seem realistic.

But she stayed to find out the truth.

She probably hadn't slept at all Friday night.

going through the events in her head over and over again

It seemed like a bad dream, a nightmare,

Finally she had gotten to the point where she could accept
that Jesus was dead.

She would never see Jesus alive again.

She would never hear her friend call her name,

or tell her of the wonderful love of her Heavenly Father.

I imagine all these thoughts, fears and doubts

were running through Mary's mind after Peter and John had left.
 And in the midst of her doubt her courage sprang up,
 And she went to look into the tomb again--for herself.

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. John 20:11-12

Why did Peter and John did not see two angels?
 Did they miss seeing angels because we men,
 Deal in fact and figures,
 Square rules and structure,
 We're looking for death shrouds, grave wrappings and bodies.

Mary, however, was looking for hope.

**The angels 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." John 20:13**

At this point her eye caught movement at the entrance,
14At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" John 20:14-15

She didn't know it was Jesus,
 She thought it was the gardener.

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." John 20:15

She would try with all her might to carry Jesus out of wherever He was.
 But it takes more than devotion or courage to find a resurrected Christ.
 It takes FAITH.

III. MARY A WOMAN OF FAITH

At that point, Jesus opened her eyes and spoke her name.

16Jesus said to her, "Mary." John 20:16

She turned to look directly at Him,
 and suddenly realized that the gardener
 was no mere weed-killer –
 he was the sin-killer, the Master Designer of the Garden itself.
 The breath of all life.

**The empty tomb did not confirm the resurrection for Mary.
 But the Risen Savior did.**

He was the same person she experienced before his death.
 Who now bore the marks of his crucifixion.

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). John 20:16

And she ran towards Him,

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. John 20:17

The KJV says, "Touch me not."
 The NLT says, "Don't cling to me."

However you word it, the original language still means,
 “Don’t hang on to me too tightly.”

Well, hold on a second.
 Wasn’t Jesus always encouraging people to touch him.
 To bring their children to him.
 Matthew records the story of including Mary Magdalene,
 who anointed and clung to his feet and worship Him.

And even later this same night,
 Luke will record Jesus as saying to his followers,
**“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see: a ghost does not
 have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Luke 24:39**

But here,
 to His most devoted of followers, Jesus says,
“Don’t hang on to me too tightly.”
 Don’t cling to me. Why?

Jesus meets your need for faith,
 In exactly the way you need it.

Mary thought her need for Jesus was to have everything the way it was before.
 His physical presence to be seen, heard and touched forever.
 And she probably thought,
 No more Maundy Thursday and Black Fridays.
 no more crosses and no more graves.
 “I must never lose Him again. I’ll just cling to Jesus.”

Jesus said: Mary,
“Don’t hold on to me too tightly. I will be with you forever,
 The old way of knowing me is over.
 I must ascend to the Father.
 How you know me through your eyes,
 And ears and hands,
 Will now be known by faith thru the Spirit in what is not seen.”

“If you let Me go Mary,
 I will send the Holy Spirit,
 And you will discover a far greater relationship
 with me in the spirit.
 Than you had with me in the flesh.
**Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your
 Father, to my God and your God.' " John 20:17**

**18Mary 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.**

The proof of resurrection isn’t only in the Open tomb.
 But in seeing the Risen Savior.
 It is seeing him appear for 40 days with his followers,

Even behind locked doors.
 But the greatest proof of the resurrection is also
 Seeing with eyes of faith and experiencing Christ with an open heart.

I was 12 years old when the risen Christ,
 knocked at the door of my heart.
 I opened that door and discovered
 That he lives, and he lives in me.
 And over the years I have seen him again, and again thru his word
 and worship, small groups, and in prayer and devotions.
 The power of the Holy Spirit is alive and present even here.
 To bring us new life.

This morning as I speak to you,
 The world is changing at an immense pace,
 Medicines are being found to bring cure to our most wicked diseases.
 Shipping is bringing food and clothing to the starving masses,
 Technology is helping to deal with heart attacks, Alzheimer's, AIDS, and infections.
 Our knowledge is increasingly opening up the secrets of this universe.
 But there is only one answer to death.
 Once you know that reality, then we have a choice.

We can be like the four-year-old boy who was visiting his grandmother over Easter. As they were going into the church, grandmother said to the boy: "Now the pastor is going to give you a small cross during children's minute to remind you of how Jesus died for you. Ok." At this point, the four year old announced, "I think I'd rather stand outside with my basket and wait for the Easter bunny."

We have a choice.
 To believe the ways and things of the world.
 Or to turn and believe in the way of Christ.
 The only way to have final proof
 That this is true for us.
 Is to take a risk
 And open our heart by faith to the risen Savior.
 And let him bring to us a resurrection in our lives.

“Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we’ve been given a brand new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now. I Peter 1:3-4 MSG

Christ is Risen, He is risen Indeed.