

Season of Lent 2021
Weekly Devotional Series
for Mid-Fraser Cluster



A MIDWEEK DEVOTIONAL
time in the Word together

Week 4 to Easter Sunday

Lenten Devotional Booklet 2021

This is a devotional booklet created by the clergy and laity of the Mid-Fraser Cluster, to help you stay connected faithfully during the Season of Lent, which starts with Ash Wednesday and ends with Easter Sunday (including Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday). These passages may or may not be preached on, as the clergy have not planned their sermons that far ahead yet, but our overall goal is to have a preaching/liturgy theme of ecological and environmental hope. This may come through in these devotions, but no guarantee.

May this be a sacred time for you as we continue during the struggles of social isolation in times of Covid-19. Instead of remembering our struggles and difficulties, this is meant as a tool to uplift you and remember that Creation is all around us and can be cause for appreciation, recognition, and connection to God, our Creator.

How to Create a Sacred Space in Your Home

Spend some time thinking about what makes a space sacred for you.

A sacred space can help you pause, unplug, and reflect on the only work that really matters: loving the world, practicing gratitude, and being kind to yourself. Having a designated space in your home for prayer, meditation, or private reflection can be a constant reminder of how important it is to cultivate this sense of awe and wonder in your life.

It can be useful to set an intention before creating your space. What are you seeking to add to your life by setting this space apart in your home? What do you hope to do in this space? How do you honour God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit? Is it something you see yourself using everyday, or just on important holy days, anniversaries, or seasons?

Setting apart a space for rituals and meditation is an act that invites people to make mental, emotional, and energetic space for these practices, as well. A space also serves as a daily reminder to connect with yourself and with the divine.

If free space in your home is limited, get creative. Search for corners of your house that aren't being used. Add a billowy curtain or a screen to a corner that you can tuck away when the space isn't in use. Look for a closet floor, bookshelf, windowsill, or the top of a dresser that you can easily clear out. You could create a portable sacred space by filling a box with objects that are meaningful to you. A sacred space can also be as simple as your favorite chair or a pillow.



Fourth Week in Lent

Numbers 21: 4 – 9 (The Rev. Tim Bowman)

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶ Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Reflection:

This passage is among our Lenten readings because Jesus alludes to it in John 3:14: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Just as seeing the bronze serpent lifted up on a pole was salvific, so too was Jesus' elevation on a cross salvific.

First, a confession: I don't know what to do with the God of this passage. I don't know what to do with the angry God who inflicts pain and death on the people out of (perhaps understandable) frustration at their (also perhaps understandable) fatigue and frustration at another detour in their route to the promised land. I am unwilling to offer a half-hearted justification, and equally unwilling to say that there is no value here. I simply lack the theological imagination to find the blessing.

That being said: In the Gospel According to John, seeing is believing. In other words, simply observing another one of many brutal Roman crucifixions does not bring people to God. To really see Jesus on the cross is to understand him as God's love for the world, on the cross.

This may provide the answer for another question. In response to Moses' petition, God does not take away the deadly snakes. Rather, God provides a remedy: from that time forward, anyone who received a snakebite would look upon the bronze serpent and be healed. Why such a bizarre cure? Why is the cure and the disease nearly identical?

Perhaps because when they gaze at this bronze snake, this standard on a pole, they gaze heavenward. Instead of looking down at the bland and familiar bread in their hands, or forward to the nearly endless wilderness, or backwards toward the Promised Land they are now detouring away from, they are looking towards God. There is no particular reason for the snakes to attack them; there is no particular reason for the cure to be a representation of the same serpents. The very lack of reason is the point: It is because and only because God wills it. The snake can bring death; the snake can bring

healing. It is not the snake that causes either, but God. You look at the bronze serpent because you know that you are dependent on God to bring healing. You truly see the snake, and Jesus, when you see them as the location of God's salvation. Interestingly, we learn later on in the Bible that a future Israelite king will order the destruction of this relic because people have forgotten this lesson. They have begun worshiping the bronze serpent as an idol, as something divine in itself, rather than a medium for divine power.

Question:

This passage encourages us to keep our minds on God during our Lenten journey in the wilderness. What practices have you found helpful in doing so? Are there new practices you might

want to adopt?

Prayer:

Help me to follow you, God, in the tedious and bland and boring times. Not out of fear, but out of trust. Let me see your guiding hand always. Amen.

[Reference: Rabbi Yisroel Cotlar, "Why Did G-d Choose a Serpent to Heal the Israelites?" *Chabad.org*.]

John 3: 14 – 21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."



Fifth Week in Lent Don Strangway

Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34

A New Covenant

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Reflection:

The people of Israel and Judah had been punished severely, many were taken in to exile in Babylon and the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. This was in part because they had forsaken the worship of their one God and worshipped Baal and other Gods. Other factors, however, were that they had acted shamefully in many ways: drunkenness, adultery, economic inequality, where the wealthy boasted about their wealth. They failed to keep the Sabbath Holy, they forsook the laws of the Lord, ie. common decency and fairness towards their own people. They followed “false prophets”, conspired against each other and were dishonest, so that they could not trust each other. Jeremiah, with God speaking through him, did his best to dissuade them of their wicked ways and warned them of the terrible things that would happen to them, but they ignored him and persecuted him.

This story, in many ways, parallels our society today and the warnings today are the same. There was, however, hope in Jeremiah’s time and the ability, with a change of heart, to seek forgiveness and to make a new covenant. With a change of heart, a change in our ways and with God’s guidance, we can also make a new covenant with God and with the peoples of the earth. With a common goal for all people, we have the ability to create a more harmonious society and save our planet from destruction.

Question:

What is one act of compassion that I can do for someone in this Lenten Season?

Prayer: God, show us how to respect the wonderful world that you gave us. Amen



John 12: 20 – 33 (Rev. Tim Bowman)

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Reflection:

Jesus is the master of the non-sequitur. "Teacher, some Greeks are here to see you."
"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

What?

As usual, John's words require careful unpacking. These Greeks have come to worship at the Passover festival, and so are either Jews who live in Greece or Gentiles who worship the God of Israel. They approach Philip and Andrew, perhaps because of their comfortably Greek names, but Philip, Andrew, and Andrew's brother Simon Peter are all from Bethsaida, far to the north of Jesus' Judean homeland, beyond the territory of the Jews' estranged cousins the Samaritans.

The underlying logic of the Gospel According to John, however, is relationship. In Jesus, there are no outsiders. In Jesus, we are all related; entangled, even. And when Jesus is lifted up on the cross, we will all be lifted up with him. "Drawn" is too polite a translation. The Greek word is *helkuo*, better translated "dragged." When Jesus is lifted up on above the Earth and fully revealed as the son of God, we will be dragged up with him. When I take my computer mouse out of its box, an awful tangle of cords and other hardware inevitably comes with it. We are inextricably linked with Jesus and, through Jesus, with each other, and through Jesus, to God. Jesus as the embodied Word of God is good news because Jesus shares in our humanity and thus we share in his divinity. His life demonstrates this and his crucifixion and resurrection its final revelation.

Siblings in Christ, tied together whether we know or desire it, we are not alone in our COVID isolation. We are not alone in family distress or friendship drama or financial woes. We have dignity and worth in the one who lives and dies and rises again with us, regardless of our names and which land we call home. We are all of us journeying to the cross whether we wish it or not, but in Christ we are not alone.

Question:

What does it mean if everyone I pass on the street, or everyone passing on the street that I see through my quarantine window, is my sibling in Christ?

Prayer:

Holy one in and through whom I am entangled, help me to see the blessing and the obligation of this entanglement. Show me the hope. Amen.



Palm Sunday . (The Rev. Bill Booth)

Mark 11: 1 – 11

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples² and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it."³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'"⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it,⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Reflection:

This story is full of symbolism and meaning. Jesus is about to enter the city of Jerusalem through the gate that enters directly into the Temple Courtyard. This gate is opened only on the first of the Passover week. It is also tradition that the king or the Messiah will enter the city via this gate. The description echoes the words of Isaiah about the coming of the king. Nothing here is without significance. The singing of hosanna is a prayer of God save us and the traditional song of the pilgrims entering the holy city. Jesus entering this way is provocative and directly challenging the temple authorities. The last verse makes it clear the whole point of the day's event was to make a statement. He entered, looked around and left.

In this story, there is celebration, tradition and provocation. This year's Holy Week tradition has been taken out of our hands. We cannot sign our hosannas with each other in the church. Yet perhaps more than in the past we need to call out to God in celebration for salvation. God save us.

Holy Weeks begins after Palm Sunday and we are invited on a journey through the story of the trial, suffering death and resurrection of Jesus. If we read with our hearts open it can be disturbing and moving. We may feel the abandonment and despair but the hope is always there waiting for us.

Questions:

What do you need God to save you from?

Prayer:

Holy One, Your presence entered the Holy City through the beautiful gate. Enter my heart through the beauty of my true self and walk with me through my Holy Week suffering that I might truly know resurrection in my life. Amen.



Holy Thursday (The Rev. Bill Booth)

John 13: 1 – 17, 31b – 35

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Reflection:

In the time of Jesus feet washing was common because people walked on dusty roads in sandals. It was an act of hospitality and kindness. It was also a sign of humility for the washer and offering honour to the one whose feet were being washed. Jesus is making a point to his disciples. One last lesson on how to be community. Serve one another and do not seek to be above the other. If Jesus whom they call Lord and Teacher washes their feet how much more should they serve one another.

If the Gospel writer places this story as Jesus' last act then it is intended to be remembered and understood. The rest of the Gospel is his final discourse and the passion story. The feet washing story finishes with the new commandment: "Love one another." Not entirely new as this message was and has been said so many times and ways. Love one another enough that you feel no shame in caring for the other. Wash each other's metaphorical feet. Jesus doesn't wash their feet to indicate we should go out and wash feet rather that we should not let go of traditional social status rules that prevent us from offering compassion and care for others.

We prepare to enter the story of the Passion or the Suffering of Jesus. As you read or hear it read remember the underlying hope is love. Jesus completes his ministry in John's Gospel telling us to love one another.

Questions:

Have you experienced a time when someone offered you kindness without condition? What did it feel like?

Have you offered an unconditional act of kindness to another person? What did it feel like?

Prayer:

Compassionate God: Help me to serve my sisters and brothers with love. Teach my heart to love without condition. Amen.



Good Friday (The Rev. Tracy Fairfield)

Mark 15: 1 – 39 (40 – 47)

Jesus before Pilate

15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ² Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” ³ Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified

⁶ Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. ⁷ Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. ⁸ So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. ⁹ Then he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do^[a] with the man you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ They shouted back, “Crucify him!” ¹⁴ Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began saluting him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰ After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²¹ They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

²⁵ It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” ²⁷ And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!” ³¹ In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and

saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

The Death of Jesus

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴² When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

Reflection:

When other people control your destiny, when there is nothing you can do to change your own circumstances; these are the worst of times. Pilate questions Jesus politely enough, but Jesus is completely at his mercy. Pilate can do what he likes with him. We contemplate the scene and we say, "If only there was an advocate for this good and just man, someone with power to speak up for him." It is true also with the soldiers; they can humiliate, mock, abuse all they want, for they are the ones with power. Thankfully, Jesus has his Abba, God, to whom he can prayerfully channel his fear and frustration.

The death of Jesus was not an isolated event. The cross has become a symbol of those who are prepared to put their lives on the line for persons who are being cruelly or unjustly persecuted. In the early 1940s, in Nazi Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was prepared to go to his death rather than allow Nazi terror under the leadership of Hitler,

the fanatic, to go unchallenged. He writes, "This is what I mean by worldliness – taking life in its stride with all its failures and successes, its experiences and helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves into the arms of God. How can fear or failure lead us astray when we participate with God in the sufferings of the world?" Christ has been crucified down the ages...

I think of the hymn "Draw the Circle Wide" in More Voices. There is a great metaphor in the circle. The circle becomes personal when we suffer crucifixion. The circle becomes personal as we stand alone and our loved ones cannot or will not respond to our deepest feelings. The circle becomes personal when we are betrayed by a friend we trusted absolutely. The circle becomes personal when we feel powerless and helpless. And we become crucifiers when we realize that we, too, abuse power that comes with a relationship or a position of authority. We become crucifiers when we know of injustice in our friendship circle or community but do not have the courage to name it. We become crucifiers when we see a need in our world that we are able to meet, but ignore it.

Questions:

What crucifixions have you experienced in life?

How have you, if at all, crucified others? Were you even aware of it at the time? How does it feel looking back on it now?

Can you think of other symbols of the cross in the course of history, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer?

Prayer:

We stand at the foot of the cross and look up. We regain our Christian perspective. We will see our weakness through the eyes of Christ. The cross changes our perspective. We will find courage through the example of Christ. The cross changes our perspective. We will stay the course through the persistence of Christ. The cross brings us to a new way. We will experience peace through working in the spirit of Christ. Amen.



Easter Sunday

Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 14 – 24

A Song of Victory

- ¹ O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!
- ² Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
- The LORD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;
¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”
- ¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
- ¹⁸ The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.
- ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.
- ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.
- ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
- ²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
- ²³ This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
- ²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

John 20: 1 – 18 (The Rev. Bill Booth)

The Resurrection of Jesus

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the

linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflection

There is so much in this story to consider but today I wish to hold up for you the interchange between Mary and the Risen Christ. Mary doesn't recognize Jesus until he speaks her name. There is something intensely personal about this event. Mary responds with the title of greatest honour for her culture. Rabbouni from the Aramaic meaning great Teacher. It was the honorific used to reference the High priest in the temple.

In our despair and anxiety sometimes it is only when we can finally hear our named called out in love that we can see our hope. Mary responds to her name with recognition and overwhelming hope. She comes from utter despair to complete hope. We are a resurrection people but so often we behave as if we cannot hear our names called. A favourite hymn makes this point “I have called you by your name, you are mine.” To be called by name is to belong. It creates hope. We all yearn to belong and be known. This is why Peter's denial is so sad he denies Jesus name.

We wait in so many situations in our lives for our name to be called to indicate we are next to seen or served. We wait in loneliness and isolation as non-being because we are not known. Yet with the calling of our name we rise up, we become real, we belong. On this Easter morning, you are known.

The Resurrection story is about your resurrection as well. Mary is raised from despair and you are raised from all that burdens your soul. You are known and named.

Question

Have you had an experience where no one knew your name? What does it feel like to be known, recognised or named?

Prayer

Risen Christ, Hear my prayer. I name You beloved teacher, and I recognise you. Speak my name into my heart so that I may believe and be set free. Amen



Alleluia