

Pastor Gail Duba
John 20:1-18

Who is it *You* are looking for?

Easter Sunday B
4/4/2021

Then came Sunday morning, EASTER SUNDAY MORNING! Let's go walking. --It was still dark when we walk with Mary Magdalene to the garden tomb. Her head is bowed for there is no joy in this journey. Her Lord, her teacher, her friend has been executed on trumped up charges. His followers do not know what to do; they fear for their own lives. It is a journey made by a woman whose heart is weighed down. It is a journey to anoint her Messiah who has died. She saw immediately that the stone had been rolled away from the cave's entrance and that the grave was empty. Alarmed, Mary ran to find Simon Peter and John. Together, they ran back to the grave site and found it just as Mary had described it. The stone pushed back and the tomb EMPTY.

Peter & John turned back toward home, trying to sort out what on earth this could mean, but Mary, so crestfallen, stayed there in the garden just outside the tomb to grieve & mourn alone. She wept softly. She thought someone had stolen Jesus' body. She wondered aloud: How could they do this? Haven't they done enough? Now this. They have stolen his body. They have hidden it from us. Have they no shame? Have they no feelings at all?

Then, in what some have called the greatest recognition scene in all of history, Mary suddenly ran head on into the Resurrection. She suddenly recognized the Risen Lord! At first, she thought that he was the gardener, but when he called her name, "Mary," her eyes were opened to the truth of Easter. She saw first hand the Risen Christ. And as always happens when we encounter the living Lord up close and personal: he put her to work. He gave her a job. He sent her to tell the good news to the others.

So, Mary ran as fast as her excited feet could carry her to find the other disciples, laughing, and shouting as she ran... the good news of Easter. "He is risen! He is risen. I have seen the Lord! Christ is risen!" Isn't that a great story? Doesn't this story make you tingle all over with excitement.

Let me ask you something: Do you want to shout this morning? Do you want to run and tell the whole wide world the good news of Easter? The Good News... that ultimately God wins! That the eternal goodness of God overcomes the evil Golgothas of history. This is the amazing, incredible, exciting message of Easter. On Good Friday, evil had its best chance to defeat God and could not do it. Christ conquered death. He came out of the grave! God won the victory, and He wants to share the Easter victory with you and me by giving us some very special Easter gifts.

I. FIRST OF ALL, EASTER GIVES US A SENSE OF PEACE.

Mary Magdalene came trudging to the tomb that morning, broken-hearted, scared, worried, confused, troubled, frightened... but there at the garden tomb... the Resurrected Christ gave her a great sense of victory and confidence and peace. An Easter card I received once read: "May the hands that formed the earth touch your body and heal it. May the breath that moved over the waters fill your soul with life. May the heart that sacrificed to save you surround your heart with comfort. May knowing that you are in the hands of an all-powerful, all-loving God... bring you peace."

This is the Good News of Easter. God wins! God has conquered Death! Good Fridays are always followed by Easter Sundays! God is still in charge! God is on both sides of the grave! God's love is the most powerful thing in the world, and God loves US! And when we understand that, when we embrace that and wrap our arms around that, and give our hearts to that... then we have the peace that passes understanding. That's the first gift that Easter gives us – a sense of peace.

II. SECOND, EASTER GIVES US A SENSE OF MEANING.

When I think about Mary Magdalene running back to tell the others the good news on that Easter that Jesus has risen. Sunday morning, I picture her running & jumping and shouting....and laughing!

It is so important, so healthy, so crucial, so Christian, so Easter, to have a good sense of the meaning in our lives... because we know that God has already won the victory and through faith in God, we can have the victory too. Come what may, because with God on our side, we cannot lose the race of life. In God's own good time and in God's own gracious way, in the world & in the world to come, God will give us the victory. First, Easter gives us a sense of peace, and 2nd, Easter gives us a sense of meaning.

III. THIRD AND FINALLY, EASTER GIVES US A SENSE OF MISSION.

When we really come face to face with the Risen Christ, He puts us to work, He gives us a job, He sends us on a mission. This is what He did for Mary. Jesus gave her a sense of mission on that first Easter morning. He told her to go and tell the good news of His resurrection to his followers, to go tell the world the amazing story of His incredible victory. Helping each other, loving each other, taking care of each other. That's why we are here. That is our Easter mission. Easter has some very special gifts for us. Easter gives us hope, forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, and it gives us a sense of peace, a sense of meaning, and a sense of mission.