

## **Choosing Resurrection Every Day**

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Trinity Church in the City of Boston

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In the name of our Risen Lord, Amen.

So what an Easter story we have in this Gospel lesson. Mary Magdalene and the other two women of tonight's lesson were a deeply sad group of women who were devastated by the loss of Jesus. They went to that tomb to pay homage to Jesus and to anoint His body. They weren't really going expecting resurrection, they weren't expecting the miracle that was waiting for them. When they arrived they were astonished to see that the door of the tomb was rolled away. Jesus' body missing and a young man in a white robe seated inside the tomb. He speaks to the women and tells them that they don't need to be afraid, for Jesus has risen, He is no longer in the tomb. And they must now go out and tell the other disciples this good news. And He finishes by telling them to go to Galilee where Jesus will meet them and the disciples. Hearing these words, there's no excitement, there's only astonishment and fear. They run off and instead of telling people, they are silent, they tell no one.

So, this is our story of Easter? It doesn't quite follow and it seems to end so abruptly. I mean, afraid, is the last word we hear. Where is there new life in being afraid? Where is the resurrection? This is and always has been a Gospel of much debate. Through history many have not been satisfied with this ending. There are actually added to the end of this ending two, short and a long edition. Both are more tidy and positive, they give you a complete picture of resurrection. Some have argued that the ending of this Gospel must have been, maybe, destroyed or broken off of the original scroll. Surely no scribe would end this story here, with women scurrying away in fear. Any way you look at it, those who study scripture have never liked this abrupt ending. However, every Gospel story has something to tell us and none of the other Gospel stories of resurrection are completely clear either.

Luke tells us that even in their joy and celebration the people struggled to believe this good news. Matthew says the disciples worshiped Jesus, but there were still some who doubted. And of course, John gives us the famous story of Doubting Thomas, who refused to believe in the resurrection until he was able to actually touch the wounds of the risen Jesus. So while Mark's ending is certainly abrupt, it still offers us the good news. I actually see great hope in this ending that so many scholars find troubling and incomplete.

First, this story shows us faithful women who had followed Jesus all of His days struggling to understand what they were being told. It shows us that this story of a risen Lord is not necessarily a rational, easy idea to swallow. Even when these women had been told by Jesus before His death, that he would rise again in triumph, they struggled.

This lesson tells us that the good news of a risen Christ is not only open to a fearful and untrusting people, but this good news is especially for all of us who may have doubting hearts. For all of us who might find it difficult to believe in something so amazing, something so extraordinary as being raised from the dead. We can gain comfort in knowing that this struggle to believe is woven into the fabric of our faith tradition.

Secondly, this supposed incomplete ending, I believe, leaves the possibility for a continued story of the risen Christ. It leaves us, not an empty tomb but an open tomb, for all of us to experience the possibility of being part of the resurrection. Not spectators, but participants. Its and invitation to us to be resurrection to one another. It invites us to see Jesus not as an archaic figure from 2000 years ago, but a living figure of redemption that we experience right here today. Not a figure that is risen and living far above us and removed from our earthly life, but a redeemer that is in our midst. A Redeemer that is living in each one of us.

In our closing hymn this evening on page 182 in verse 2, we will sing, “he comes to claim the here and now and conquer every place and time.” And in verse 3, “not throned above, remotely high, untouched, unmoved by human pain, but daily in the midst of life, our Savior with the Father reigns.” Jesus the Christ is with us in our schools, in our offices, in our neighborhoods, in our homes, in our churches, in our hearts. Nora Gallagher wrote a wonderful book a few years back entitled, *Practicing Resurrection*. She is an Episcopal lay person who was discerning her potential call to ordained ministry. So this book takes us on the journey with her. Ultimately she decides to remain a lay person in the church and she finds her gifts there. But the deep insight that she carried away from that experience was her faith and our faith is about a practicing resurrection. She explains that as Christians, we are grounded in the resurrection story. We are grounded in the good news of a Savior that triumphs over sin and death to bring us new life, a new life of love and a new life of hope. A new life that rejects fear and hate. And as Christians we are invited and called to practice this resurrection day in and day out in our own life. We are called to embody it in the very way we live. Through loving one another as Jesus loves us we can be the resurrection to the world.

Earlier last week I preached for one of our weekday Eucharist's, and I talked about the continued crucifixion of Christ in the world. When a person goes hungry or when a child is abused, or when we hurt others out of our own insecurity or live a life grounded in fear and distrust. When we are consumed with our own needs and our own desires. Any time we are unable to be in relationship with God and we turn away, as long as there is any pain and suffering in the world, death lives and crucifixion lives on.

But the good news of this day is that we are offered a different way. We are offered something more than just a crucified Christ. We are offered more than death. We are offered resurrection; we are offered triumph over death. The question is can we choose it, will we choose it?

I loved this movie called *Keeping the Faith*. It stars Edward Norton and Ben Stiller. Ben Stiller is a Rabbi and Edward Norton's character is a newly ordained Catholic priest.

They're childhood friends who have grown up together who wind up both in ministry and they are fresh out of school and starting in their churches full of energy and hope. And as the story unfolds you see some of the trials and tribulations that they hit. And there is a particular scene in this movie where the Roman Catholic priest goes and sits with a Cardinal. And he is really struggling with the choice he has made to be ordained, the choice to follow Christ ultimately in his whole life. So he says to the Cardinal, "How do you know, how do you know this is it? This is what you are supposed to doing? How do you keep believing?" Then there is this pause and the wise old Cardinal says to him; "You have to choose this every day. It isn't easy, but you get to choose it every day."

Choosing resurrection isn't something that just happens once in our life. We get to choose it day in and day out. That is the good news and the gift of this story; that its never easy, we will have doubting, we will distrust, but Jesus came even to those who doubted. Especially for those who doubted. And we are invited day in and day out to wake up and to choose that. We get to choose resurrection.

I want to close with a Celtic prayer that was set to music by Brian Peters. It was one of the final pieces of music that was sung by the choir at our Good Friday service. I have been carrying these words in my heart for these past three days as we have waited in anticipation of Easter resurrection. I think they say it so well.

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet,  
Walk with you on the road.  
And may the Christ who serves with wounded hands,  
Stretch out your hands to serve.  
May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart,  
Open up your hearts to love.  
And may you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,  
And may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you.

We get to choose this; this is the good news of what Jesus offers us today. May we all choose resurrection. Amen.