

Easter Sunday - April 12

Scripture reading for the day: John 20:1-18

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. 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." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 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. 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." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 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.'" 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.

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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.'"

John 20:17 (NRSV)

Easter morning brings beautiful traditions of spring flowers, bright colors, glorious music, and sanctuaries filled with worshippers. Preachers sometimes lament, wishing our church buildings would be filled to capacity every Sunday the way they are at Easter. I get that, but I'm also thrilled when so many gather to hear the good news, "He is risen!" The resurrection of Christ is the rock of our faith, and whether a person comes to church often or once a year, our hope is built on the assurance that death cannot hold us. We know Jesus has been raised from the grave, not to call us to come to a building each week but to live in the undying power of God's love wherever we are. The words of the risen Jesus to Mary, as they stood just outside the empty tomb, undergirds how the resurrection gets us moving. "Don't hold on to me," Jesus said. When we realize "he lives" we can't just stay where we are. We go, carrying the hope of God and sharing the love of Christ with others.

The theme of life's journey of faith fits so well. I've felt the presence of a living Lord in worship many times but even more powerfully, I've experienced a living Jesus in hospital rooms, praying with others, serving in mission, and walking alongside those who are responding to God. I sincerely hope you'll come to church on Easter morning, but my prayer is that all of us will meet the Lord where we live, work, and interact with others. Don't hold onto Jesus in just one place. Instead, recognize that you are held by Christ. And may that loving embrace lift you up and get you moving in the faith.

Pastor Larry Brown

Prayer: God of life and love, help us experience You wherever we are. May we live with You and serve You, today and every day. In the name of our living Lord, we pray. Amen.