

Easter Sunday - April 9

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."

John 20:15 (NRSVUE)

In John's gospel, we are told that Mary Magdalene sees that the stone is rolled away and goes to tell the disciples. Two of the disciples came to the tomb, saw that Jesus wasn't there, and also ran to tell the others. However, Mary stood by the tomb weeping. She is overwhelmed with sorrow at the empty tomb because she assumes that someone has taken the body of Jesus. Then, she sees Jesus standing there but doesn't realize it is him. Jesus asks why she is weeping. She thought he was the gardener and explained the reason for her sorrow.

It was Easter morning. Mary encounters the empty tomb. She is face to face with the Risen Lord, and yet she doesn't recognize him. I believe that Mary was blinded by many things that day. She was experiencing overwhelming grief and sorrow because of the events of Friday, where she had watched this man that she loved die a cruel death. She had doubt that there was hope for anything beyond the cross. She was afraid because if someone had taken his body they might accuse her and the disciples. She was confused, pained, shaken, anxious, and overwhelmed. It is hard to imagine all that was going through her mind in that moment.

The theme for our devotion has been all about recognizing God in our midst, yet often times, we are like Mary. We too can allow grief, doubt, fear, and more to get in the way of being able to see God at work around us. In the midst of our difficult times, it is often hard to acknowledge that God is right there with us. So, on this Easter Sunday, we are standing face to face with an empty tomb and a risen Lord. Do we recognize the hope that this provides to our lives? Do we see God at work around us?

While it is easy for us to look at Mary, knowing what we know now, and judge her, we must realize it was just an ordinary day for her. She didn't realize that this was a day that would change the course of history. At that moment, she wasn't expecting something miraculous to happen. It is hard to see the extraordinary when you are in the midst of the ordinary.

It is easy for us to look back and recognize God was at work on Easter, but what about the ordinary days of our lives? All too often, we don't even recognize God at work right in front of us. It is interesting to me that Mary sees Jesus and assumes that he is a gardener. It makes me wonder what he was doing there in the garden. Had Jesus been working in the garden that morning? Did he have dirt under his fingernails? Was he doing the work that he saw that needed done?

I believe that John gives this detail for a reason. Jesus being mistaken as a gardener is certainly significant and connects to his life's mission. Creation started in a garden where sin was non-existent. It was a place of peace. It was a place where God came down to walk in the garden among the people. However, Genesis tells us that sin entered the garden and created a chasm between humanity and God.

Jesus came among us to restore that garden that sin may be forgiven and our relationship with God would be restored. So, perhaps Jesus was working in the garden that day to remind us that he is at work all around us seeking to complete that mission.

On this Easter Sunday, may we not only recognize God at work through the resurrection, but may we remember that God is at work all around us. We need to be on the lookout for the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary. We need learn to recognize God's presence in the midst of everything that we experience. We need to trust that God is at work. God is working to restore all of creation, and God wants us to join in this important kingdom work that God's will may be done on earth as it is heaven.

Pastor Justin

Prayer: O God, we thank you for Your continued presence that surrounds us each day. Open our eyes that we may see You. Open our ears that we may hear You. Open our hands that we may join You in the work that You are calling us to do. Amen.