

Wicker Park Lutheran Church
Vicar Paisley LeRoy
April 11, 2020

Why. Are. We. Celebrating. When. We. Are. Living. In. This. Good Friday. World... we can't be physically together, the fear is overwhelming, we can't gather with friends and family... how can we celebrate new life on THIS day? For this very reason, many churches are postponing Easter until they return to their sanctuaries. And, sure, if the resurrection is about joy completely wiping away our sadness or destroying death-dealing forces here and now...perhaps we shouldn't be celebrating Easter just yet.

But actually...we celebrate Easter each year and also know that this world is broken and those forces still feel real. We know and proclaim the beautiful thing about the resurrection is that God breaks into the messiness and says those forces will not have the last word.

And, if we really look into these stories across each Gospel account we see that fear and death are, in fact, still very real....AND ALSO...joy and life abound. Both can and do exist together.

And this story...and, in a way, each of the stories we have heard tonight, are perfect examples of holding these things in tension.

*When it was still dark...*in this time of fear and grief...Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. When she saw the *stone rolled away* she ran away...too overwhelmed by grief at the very thought someone had stolen the body of her Savior...to even face that empty tomb.

And yet...she returns with some of the other disciples and they enter and "believe." They believe Mary's words, "they have taken Jesus' body." So they leave...back to their houses...to the place of grief and hopelessness after experiencing the death of their companion.

But Mary stays (PAUSE) Mary stays even as tears stream down her face...even as her fear and anger about what has happened to Jesus' body still exists. *Mary stays.*

And then, something curious happens...something inside her tells her to peek into the tomb where she sees the angels....Why bend down and look? This action suggests that she still holds onto hope even when her grief is *very* real.

Curious but we know this hope is for good reason! She encounters the gardener and he calls her name and she recognizes Jesus! ...Alleluia! The end.

...Not so fast...I think it's naive of us to think that in that moment *snap* all her fears have dissipated and she is *only* full of great joy. Great joy exists, yes...AND ALSO ...fear...confusion...grief...

All exist...tangled up together. Because THIS is where our God works...in this tension.

The day Mary approached that tomb, probably to weep, Jesus had already risen.

When Mary ran away in fear and grief, Jesus had already risen.

When the disciples returned home confused and hopeless, Jesus had already risen.

When Mary both wept outside the tomb *and* had hope enough to peer in...Jesus. Had. Already. Risen.

Yes, these times may still feel like we are in the shadows...like me you may feel like the dawn has yet to break...like me you may still feel stuck in the grief of this Good Friday world...and that's okay...but the Good News is Jesus. Has. Already. Risen.

There is no such thing as a perfect time for God to raise from the dead...not on that first day or on this day...but still, God broke into this tension and rose. And my faith...our faith...teaches us that God breaks into *this* day...THIS DAY...and rises.

And, for that, all I can say to that is Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed, Alleluia!